Thursday, March 3, 2011 | 8 ¥ | 5 sections / Vol. 35 / No. 85 / P10 | www.inquirer.net | Mobile diarer Text INQ to 2920 (GLOBE/TM)

No cap in oil price as world crude surges

SOARING WORLD crude prices further pushed up the cost of fuel in the Philippines, but the Department of Energy (DOE) said it was not inclined to cap prices despite claims that oil firms were engaged in price-gouging.

Energy Secretary Jose Rene Almendras said the DOE would not go back to a regulated oil industry at this time, saying that any moves to cap prices may likely put a heavy financial strain on national government coffers.

Almendras said that for the government to control fuel prices, it should put up an oil price stabilization fund (OPSF), which would require a hefty capitalization of $2 billion.

The amount, he said in a text message, would be used to ensure a 60-day supply inventory for the country.

Almendras said that despite the unrest in the Middle East and North Africa, this was not the time to implement price controls.

"The most important task is to ensure adequate supply and improve inventory as a contingency strategy," he said. "First if Congress and Senate repeal [price regulation], we still abide."

SEE SAID IN A

OIL SQUEEZE Gasoline now sells at more than P52 per liter and diesel at more than P43 (Shell in Metro Manila), even higher in the provinces as the potential for more oil shipments disruptions spread across the Middle East and North Africa.

Heidi to go back to COA if P-Noy wants her to

By Tarra Quismundo

IN A SIGN of renewed faith in government, former state auditor Heidi Mendoza, the whistle-blower on military corruption, announced last night that she was willing to go back to public service to head a growing public charter.

When asked what post, she said she would take any official but. And if the President wants her to go back to the Commission on Audit (COA), she would readily accept.

"If that's really what the President and the people want, I'm willing to go back to the COA," said Heidi, clad in a belted white dress and yellow sandals.

Mendoza, who had left the COA out of frustration in 2005, made the announcement late night during the "Mass for Truth Telling" held at the Ateneo de Manila Gesu Chapel in Quezon City.

President Aquino said earlier that

MORE A4

Ombudsman prosecuted

2 impeach complaints' witnesses testify in 11 cases vs Merci

THE TOUGH GET GOING Nina Guillemor comforts her crying daughter Lea Ann, 12, who remembers her father who chose to stay behind in Libya to help others. Guillemor says she, her 3 children and 3 others evacuated to her cars had to endure a seven-hour bus ride, 24 checkpoints and chaos at the border to escape Libya.

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Cynthia D. Balana

SOME WITNESSES in the cases now being laid at the doorstep of Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez are dead now, but others showed up to testify at yesterday's hearing at the House of Representatives, the first in a series to determine probable cause for her impeachment.

For the first complaint, Akbayan Rep. Kaka Bag-Ao cited eight cases—including Gutierrez's purported inaction on corruption charges filed against former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri and former Commissioner on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos in the NBN-ZTE scandal; the dismissal of four cases filed against Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, the husband of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, concerning their involvement in the same case; the inaction on

CONGLOMERATE A11

How they fled Libya by climbing 10-foot wall

By DJ Yap

LEAVING TRIPOLI and traveling to the border for seven hours through 24 checkpoints was a cakewalk compared to the hell a group of 11 Filipinos found when they reached the Tunisian border.

As Libya teeters toward civil war and tens of thousands of foreign workers flee, the situation on the Tunisian crossing has become "unimaginable," said a Filipino in the group that flew to Manila yesterday via Hong Kong.

"It's inhuman. If you saw that, it's worse than a jail cell, or a pig or dog cage. The authorities can't control it. Many people

HOW THEY'LL SEE

1,200 Pinoys sail to safety on luxury ship

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE FIRST IRA liners organized by the Philippine government for 1,200 workers in violence-torn Libya has left the port of Benghazi aboard a chartered luxury liner with 1,200 Filipinos aboard traveling in style, officials said.

Overland, at the Tunisia border, 10 ships joined tens of thousands of foreign workers scrambling to flee to safety amid harrowing conditions. One Filipino who arrived in Manila yesterday described the situation as the Libya Tunisia crossing as "inhuman." (See story on this page.)

The UN refugee agency and the International Organization for Migration have appealed for aid to deal with a "humanitarian crisis" as the four-day border in Tunisia where some 40,000 workers from various countries had converged from the besieged Libyan capital of Tripoli.

"We can't see scenes of people waiting en masse the border. Many have been waiting for three to four days in the freezing cold, with no shelter or food," said UN worker Ayman Gharaibeh.

LAND 8A

No heated House debates; aircon off 2nd day in a row

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

NO HEATED heat could stop them from causing embers during an election campaign. But even in Congress, lawmakers apparently could not stay in a room with no air-conditioner even for just an hour or two.

SEE HEATED A14

NOT ON MASTER LIST

No $1,000 for other Marcos victims

By Leila B. Salaverria

BEFORE WINDS Steyn died of a stroke in May last year, he asked his wife, Olivia, to take care of the letters he had received from lawyers handling the compensation claims of victims of human rights abuses during the Marcos regime.

Armed with the letters that her husband had kept and even photocopied, Olivia went to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) on Wednesday, hoping to claim the $1,000 check that each of the 7,526 martial law victims had won in a US court ruling against the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos and his family.

But Winnie's name was nowhere on the master list of claimants who were supposed to get the money (converted to P43,000) that would come from a settlement of the class action suit.

Olivia was not alone. Several others who had been detained, beaten black and blue or had had loved ones during Marcos' strongman rule would not be getting any compensation because their names were not on the master list even though they insisted they had filed claims.

They walked away empty-

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6/55 GRAND LOTTO
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P30,000,000.00

Ligot brod-in-law shows up

Sandigan asked to order Imelda to pay gov't P12M

By Leila B. Salaverria

EIGHT LAWYERS have asked the Sandiganbayan to implement its 2008 ruling ordering Rosie Nerie Nog. Imelda Marcos to pay the government nearly P12 million, plus interest, representing damages and ill-gotten funds taken from the National Food Authority.

In an omnibus motion, the Office of the Solicitor General and the Presidential Commission on Good Government said the antigraft court's ruling, handed down on Sept. 9, 2010, should be implemented.

"Records reveal that Imelda R. Marcos, as defendant and as legal representative of her spouse, defendant Ferdinand E. Marcos, did not file a motion for reconsideration or an appeal of the decision.

"The case is now ripe for execution," they said.

They said final entry the ruling was a judgment for money, the decision could be executed by demanding from Marcos, who is now a lawmaker, payment in cash, certified bank check or any other form of payment acceptable to the government.

In case she could not pay all or part of her obligation, she should provide a list of properties of every kind and nature which may be disposed of, and a list of debts due her and other credits, including bank deposits, financial interests, royalties, commissions and other personal property in control of third parties.

The state lawyers also said they were withdrawing their partial motion for reconsideration contesting the dismissal of the case against Trade Agatha Marcos' stepbrother, since he could not be located.

In its September ruling, the Sandiganbayan's Fifth Division directed Marcos to return P10 million in illegally disbursed funds from the National Food Authority (NFA), plus interest.

The court also ruled that Marcos should pay the state P1.35 million in moral, exemplary and nominal damages, plus attorney's fees.

It said the P16 million, representing proceeds from the NFA's rebate granted by the Philippine National Bank, were illegally transferred to private coffers.

It said that then President Marcos had unduly exercised NFA administrator Jose Tambunting to withdraw the funds. Tambunting, who served as the government's witness, then delivered the money to the treasury bank in Makati.

Scam raising funds for Church charity

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE ARCHDIOCESE of Manila yesterday warned potential donors against falling prey to a scam which uses the name of Manila Archbishop Luadeneto Cardinal Rosales to solicit funds.

"The cardinal does not solicit in specific amount and he also does not directly solicit for his name," Pamby Yuncuan, Manila archdiocese communications director, told reporters yesterday.

She said solicitations were only done by the archdiocese's charity arm—Caritas Manila, Hapag, Kanan and Pondo ng Pinoy.

The archdiocese found out that its name was being used for a solicitation scam when a sooner sent a letter to Cardinal Rosales appearing his supposed support for financial aid for a six-month feeding program.

Sen. Franklin Drilon also wrote to Cardinal Rosales to inform him that a check worth P12,400 has been issued for the supposed feeding program and to thank the prelate for allowing him to help feed poor Filipino children.

By TJ Burgonio and Dona Pazzibugan

THE BROTHER-IN-LAW of former military comptroller Jacinto Ligot showed up at the Senate Monday to deny he had gone into hiding.

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada yesterday said Eduardo Tambuo presented himself to the blue ribbon committee last Monday and is expected to appear at today's hearing at the Senate inquiry into the questionable plea bargain entered into by state prosecutors with plunder suspect ex-military comptroller Carlos Garcia.

"He claimed that his business [has been] affected. He said he has a business, and that he has hired bodyguards," said Estrada, who had presented whistleblowers for user budget officer George Rabusa as a surprise witness at the inquiry.

Tambuo allegedly accumulated P800 million between 1999 and 2004, and managed to purchase seats in swanky condominiums and two cars even though he declared no income for those years, according to documents obtained by Sen. Franklin Drilon.

'Overwrites'

Tambuo and Ligot's wife Erlinda, who were portrayed in previous hearings as Ligot's dummies in the latter's alleged accumulation of ill-gotten wealth, did not show up at last week's hearings for different reasons.

Erlinda, the alleged owner of several houses in the United States, was confined to a hospital for various ailments, while Tambuo could not be located last week.

Sen. Teofisto Guingona III, chair of the blue ribbon committee, said Erlinda and Tambuo had sent word that they would attend today's hearing as resource persons.

LIGOT

"It's going to be a Ligot show," he said.

The inquiry would not be complete until Erlinda and Tambuo testify, Estrada said.

Last hearing

"That should be the last hearing if Mrs. Ligot and Mr. Tambuo show up. We will wrap it up," he said.

Other invited resource persons include former Solicitor General Frank Chavez, former military finance operations officer Col. Felipe Pacheco, former military chief accountant Generoso del Castillo Jr. and Garcia, among others.

Meanwhile, a defense department source said panel looking into the alleged diversion of military funds into the personal slush fund of top generals failed to meet the 30-day deadline imposed by Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin to turn in its findings by the end of February.

15-day extension

The three-person investigating committee asked for a 15-day extension citing the unavailability of the retired brokers, Rabusa and former state auditor Heidi Mendoza.

DND spokesperson Eduardo Ano said the committee was informed by Congress "that those resource persons may not be available until after they have concluded the hearings."

Ano said the panel wanted a firsthand discussion with Rabusa and Mendoza.

Gazmin formed the panel last Jan. 28 to investigate the allegations Rabusa made before the Senate on the alleged multi-million peso "parlours" and "pasalubong" cash gifts for former military chiefs Angelo Reyes, Diomedio Ml. Ismarca and Roy Cimatu.

Rabusa implicated Ligot and Garcia in the alleged financial irregularities.

Reyes killed himself a few days after Rabusa made his statements. Villanueva and Cimatu have denied having received military funds for their personal use.

No assurance

Ano has admitted there is no assurance that Rabusa, Mendoza or other resource persons who appeared in the congressional hearings would show up at the DND investigation.

"There is no way that we can force them to attend. What we can only do is to access the records of the hearings and we can review all these statements and pick out whatever lessons or leads that can be used for the purposes of the investigating committee," he said.

In any event, Ano said the committee is focused on what bodies reforms the military can undertake since it will be Congress that will recommend the prosecution of whoever is liable and the Department of Justice would be conducting its own investigation.

"Anyway, the department and the AFP are not really the government agency that will pursue judicial action ... The only thing that the department and the AFP can commit is full cooperation and full support to all those efforts," he said.

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Massacre victims kin hit impending Ampatuan bail

By Marlon Ramos

RELATIVES and other relatives of some of the media workers slain in the Maguindanao massacre trooped to the Court of Appeals in Manila yesterday to denounce what they claimed was a "hideous plan" to free a prime Ampatuan clan member.

Along with media groups supporting their cause, the families let out their despair over "terrible reports" that the appellate court may act favorably on the petition of former Maguindanao Vice Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan.

"We are here because of the troubling news we got. It seems that these people in the Court of Appeals are really callous," an emotional Monette Andaya said in Filipino.

Andaya lost her husband, Maguindanao Gazette publisher and editor Napoleon Salapuay, in the Nov. 23, 2009 mass murders. Zaldy and other members of his influential clan are standing trial for the killings.

Bearing a tarpaulin printed with the words "Help us find justice," the media relatives' families questioned the motive of Associate Justices Simeon Ramirez and Marlene Gonzales in refusing to inhibit in the deliberation of Zaldy Ampatuan's petition.

In his petition, Zaldy asked the appeals court to uphold the April 17, 2008, order of former Justice Secretary Alberto Agra which cleared the former ARMM governor on the multiple murder case.

Ramirez, Gonzales and Teresa Soluta-Gervasio,

'Enslaved' OFWs rescued from gas field off Australia

By Jerome Aning

OVERSEAS FILIPINO workers (OFWs) alleged to be victims of exploitation have been flown out of an offshore gas field in Australia, according to a labor union which exposed the OFWs' "slave-like" conditions.

The Australian Workers' Union (AWU) said it transported two of the OFWs to Perth, the capital of the state of Western Australia, on Tuesday night from their ship, the Maersk Discoverer.

"We've been told they will all be paid [unconfirmed] pay rates, following the request of their slave labor [sic]," AWU national secretary Paul Howes said in a statement posted on the union's website.

Their planned replacements, who are also Filipinos, are in Perth too, according to the union.

Maintenance crew

According to wire reports, there are about a dozen Filipinos working as painters and maintenance crew on a ship plying the so-called Northwest Shelf off Western Australia. The area is the site of numerous oil and gas wells, pipelines, production areas and support facilities.

But only the two OFWs, whose cases has been taken up by the AWU, had complained of their condition.

"While the details of this incident still need to be investigated thoroughly, what we know clearly is that no-less-than-gruesome wonder-stoned small villages of bolting-work opportunities in Australia. Opportunities which sound like a dream—but in reality often turn into hell," Howes said.

The OFWs are expected to file formal complaints against their recruiters and contractors. The Australian immigration department is also investigating the circumstances of their employment.

The Department of Labor and Employment in Manila earlier said it was monitoring the case through the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration and the Philippine Overseas Labor Office in Australia.

Back pay

Howes said the workers, who have been in Australian waters on and off for the past 18 months, could expect back pay so that they will receive the same salary as Australian offshore oil and gas field workers.

The AWU leader spoke to the media in Sydney yesterday about the conditions of the OFWs.

Howes said that the Danish multinational Maersk has sacked the Hong Kong-based contractor that hired the Filipinos. He quoted Maersk as saying that the workers would be repaid by paid.

According to the AWU, the OFWs were hired as if they were working in the Philippines and not Australia, by a company in Malaysia that specializes in finding skilled workers for oil fields and the maritime industry. The contract that the OFWs signed showed they were employed by a Hong Kong-based firm named Paramount Ltd.

The AWU said the workers were paid less than A$23 (about P1,081) instead of the A$15 (about P665) per hour federal minimum wage.

The 4WU-Maritime Union of Australia Officers' Alliance exposed the condition of the OFWs on Monday. The labor union flew out the workers aboard in Perth.

Comelec to rush voter's IDs of Pinoys bound for Taiwan

By Jerome Aning

THE COMMISSION on Elections (Comelec) yesterday said it will expedite the issuance of voter's identification cards to Filipino workers bound for Taiwan, at the request of Malacañang.

The Comelec ID is one of three IDs being required of all applicants for work visas by the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office (Taipei), Taiwan's de facto embassy here. The others are the Social Security System (SSS) and the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) IDs.

"We wish to inform all Taiwan-bound OFWs that we have put in place measures that shall ensure the swift release of their voter ID cards to facilitate their visa application," said Comelec spokesperson Jaime Antonio Jimenez in a statement.

He explained that since the first-ranch processing was "a special case" and would disrupt the regular processing of the IDs, a processing fee of P75 would be imposed.

Any OFW who likes a request for the voter's ID between 8 a.m. and 12 noon will get his ID on 4 p.m. on the same day, Jimenez said.

Applications must be filed at the Central File Division of the Comelec's Election Records and Statistics Department at the Comelec main office in Intramuros, Manila. The OFWs have to present their employment contracts to show that they are really going to Taiwan.

The Taiwanese is require only one of three IDs for new hires, since Feb. 10, however, it asked that all three IDs be produced.

The new requirement is seen as being part of the retaliatory measures that the Taiwanese government has imposed in protest against the Philippines' deportation to China on Feb. 2 of 14 Taiwanese nationals arrested for alleged online fraud.

The government has refused to apologize to Taipei despite the self-governing island's threat to freeze the hiring of OFWs.

It is believed that former President Fidel Ramos, who will be visiting Taiwan today, may open bilateral discussions on the issue with Taiwan officials.

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Kiko calls on Merci to quit; Miriam hits House

By Christian V. Esguerra and Norman Bordadora

TWO of the senators who will sit as judges if the impeachment case against Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez is elevated to the Senate for trial yesterday said Gutierrez had no one to blame but herself for the ongoing proceedings at the House of Representatives.

Sen. Panfilo Pangilinan Lifestyle added on Gutierrez to step down, while Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago said she was embarrassed by the performances of the lawmakers in the House.

Speaking strongly in Filipino, Pangilinan, an ally of the Aquino administration, said Gutierrez should be "ashamed" and resign her post "if she had any dignity left."

He also said the Office of the Ombudsman had been dismissed routinely because of Gutierrez's "negligence of her sworn duty."

Santiago, a former trial court judge, questioned the conduct of the impeachment proceedings.

"I watched them on [TV]. I am sorry to say or maybe I am too innocent in defending the Ombudsman, but it seems to me that there is no probable cause against [her]. They're just enumerating their grievances, but what is the evidence that she has betrayed the trust reposed on her by her appointing authority?" she said.

Santiago reminded the complainants: "You cannot charge the Ombudsman just because you don't like the way she decided a case."

"Certain discretionary matters are allowed within the discretion of a certain public official so you cannot question that decision by means of an impeachment complaint," the senator said.

Watchdog's movement

According to Santiago, "impeachment should be done when the presence of the public official is no guarantee to governance that due process must be removed from office."

The senator said efforts were being made to prevent Gutierrez because she was an Arroyo appointee. If this were indeed so, she said, "then let's just call it by its proper name—an anti-democratic movement."

Santiago said legislators should "automatically inhibit" themselves from impeachment proceedings if they or their kin had pending cases in the Office of the Ombudsman.

She did not say if she was referring to Iloilo Rep. Niel Tupas Jr., the chair of the House justice committee who, along with his father, has a pending case.

"My word of advice is this: do not use a legal answer to cloak or disguise a political issue or else the public will not be misled," she said.

Santiago also said impeachment had to be "understood as a term for means that has garb in the eyes of the public to very angry at the official."

"But it does not necessarily mean that if you are privately angry over private grievances that you have to impeach that official," she said.

Members cave

Malacañang also weighed in on the issue, with President Aquino's deputy spokesperson agreeing with the idea that Gutierrez's inaction on the case of a former police officer could have sparked the August 2010 hostage crisis that caused the deaths of eight Hong Kong tourists.

Abigail Valte said the case of the late former Sr. Insp. Rolando Mendoza was a clear instance of the Ombudsman taking too long to decide on an issue.

"We cannot that wrong's moving or had an progress, we can cite specific cases. I think the one I can most readily remember is the case of Mendoza, whose motion for reconsideration was pending for too long," Valte said in a news briefing.

Verbrugge was not what sparked what happened on Aug. 23," she said.

Public opinion

Malacañang had earlier indicated that it supported the impeachment process against Gutierrez.

Nonetheless, Valte said there was no need for Mr. Aquino to personally his allies in the House to back the impeachment proceedings.

"We believe there is no need for such a call because public opinion is rather clear. The lawmakers know that, and that's why they are acting in what they see—because there is a strong clamor [for Gutierrez's impeachment]," Valte said.

No sweep

Former ruling party tabbed Danilo Lim also called for Gutierrez's ouster, saying she was giving public servants a "bad image."

He said Gutierrez's "hardline and arrogant stance" to fight impeachment "must be met with an iron fist that is steely inflexible" by the House administration.

"Meet the investors should sooner no mercy from the impeachment process," Lim, a retired brigadier general who launched in December a movement to oppose corruption under the Aquino administration, said in a statement. *With a report from Bona E. Pazzibugan*

Ombudsman prosecuted; 2 impeach complaints' witnesses testify

From page A1

the death of Navy Ensign Philip Burgher, and the arrest of three Malaysian Rep. Rose Montemayor Barragan in a women's suffs—to show "a pattern of inability, inefficiency and manifest partiality in favor of high-ranking government officials to the detriment of the public welfare."

Selling justice?

He also based the other four counts on Gutierrez's dismissal of the robbery case of former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, the acquittal of a graft case involving DPWH undersecretary Victorino Jr. then President Aquino on her culpability in the NBN-ZTE scandal, and failure to look into the P1 million dinner of Arroyo and her entourage at the swank La Cirque in New York.

Ensign Theodore Andrew Felipe and Bontoyan herself testified as witnesses for the first complaint.

Felipe Bontoyan said potential witnesses in his son's death in September 1995 had died or had gone missing.

For the second complaint, Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casiño said the 53 documents that his witnesses presented as evidence for three main issues—the P728 million fertilizer fund scam, the "euro generals scandal" involving military police officials caught in October 2008 at the Moscow international airport with an undeclared sum of money, and the Mega Pacific rehabilitation contract with the Comelec which the Supreme Court voided on Jan. 11, 2010—would be more than enough for the joint committee to find probable cause for impeachment.

"Your honor, we only need to establish probable cause. We're not here to establish whether she's guilty beyond reasonable doubt. This is an obvious betrayal of public trust," Casiño said.

'Why were they smiling?'

Only a handful of lawmakers head to Gutierrez were present at the hearing.

One of them, Davao del Sur Rep. Hilde Cagas, left in a huff a few minutes into the hearing, apparently annoyed that Tupas and Deputy Speaker Gerardo Espina III were sending subpoenas to Marcos Jr. and former Comelec chair Benjamin S. Abalos Jr. during the marathon session.

"I don't know why they were smiling when I raised this issue. Many in my town and we were among the original Marcos supporters," Cagas said.

No-show

Gutierrez herself was a no-show, contrary to her lawyer's earlier declaration that she would have her answers the most questions through her lawyer Anselmo Diga, which were read aloud by Iloilo Rep. Niel Tupas Jr., chair of the House committee on justice hearing the two impeachment complaints against her.

Reply tomorrow

At the opening of the hearing, Gutierrez's lawyer Diga said that his client had no intention of derailing the impeachment process and that she would file an answer "in abundance of caution" (with extreme caution) or without prejudice to the outcome of her pending appeal to the Supreme Court.

Diga asked that Gutierrez, who was scheduled to present her side today, be given until Monday to submit her reply. But Tupas agreed to give her until tomorrow only.

"Never mind if we have a pending motion for reconsideration. We are not waiting. Just right in the answer! Just as we are able to preserve our rights," Tupas said in explaining his presence at the hearing.

Tupas initially rejected Gutierrez's request. But he eventually relented and agreed to postpone today's hearing (where she was supposed to give her side) to tomorrow, saying he is targeting her written reply tomorrow.

Diga had said in an earlier letter that Gutierrez would "face her accusers and prove in your committee that the charges against her are false and baseless."

He added that Gutierrez had an unblemished record in her four decades of public service. "If you look at all of the charges, they are not based on any act of corruption or graft. They are based on supposed violations committed by the Ombudsman in the course of the performance of her functions," he told the committee.

If Gutierrez omits the June 7 hearing, the committee will proceed to vote on the finding of probable cause before the two complaints are consolidated into one case for submission to the plenary for deliberations and voting, Tupas warned.

No action in 6 years

Testifying on the P728 mil. fertilizer fund scam for the second impeachment complaint, Benito Bautista, secretary general of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), said a witness in the case had been killed and another terminated pregnancy in the six years of "no action" on a complaint filed by KMP in 2004 in the Office of the Ombudsman.

Bautista said Perla Rodriguez, a peasant leader of Agrarian Darang Magbubukid ng Gitnang Luzon (ADMG) from Mexico, Pampanga, was killed in her own house by suspected army soldiers in January 2006 during the time of then Gen. Jovito Palparan.

Nilo Amado, another witness who testified in the Senate inquiry into the same issue in 2005, had also been reported missing since April 12, 2007, Bautista said.

He said he himself went into hiding for two years after his testimony in the Senate.

Bautista said the Senate had established irregularities in the use of public money intended for farmers and recommended the filing of the case against former Agriculture Secretary Luis "Luisito" Lorenzo and Undersecretary Jocelyn Sulayao.

He said that since the case was filed in the Office of the Ombudsman in 2004, Gutierrez had not even bothered to inform them about developments.

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No action in 6 years

Testifying on the P728 mil. fertilizer fund scam for the second impeachment complaint, Benito Bautista, secretary general of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), said a witness in the case had been killed and another terminated pregnancy in the six years of "no action" on a complaint filed by KMP in 2004 in the Office of the Ombudsman.

Bautista said Perla Rodriguez, a peasant leader of Agrarian Darang Magbubukid ng Gitnang Luzon (ADMG) from Mexico, Pampanga, was killed in her own house by suspected army soldiers in January 2006 during the time of then Gen. Jovito Palparan.

Nilo Amado, another witness who testified in the Senate inquiry into the same issue in 2005, had also been reported missing since April 12, 2007, Bautista said.

He said he himself went into hiding for two years after his testimony in the Senate.

Bautista said the Senate had established irregularities in the use of public money intended for farmers and recommended the filing of the case against former Agriculture Secretary Luis "Luisito" Lorenzo and Undersecretary Jocelyn Sulayao.

He said that since the case was filed in the Office of the Ombudsman in 2004, Gutierrez had not even bothered to inform them about developments.

Gutierrez omits the June 7 hearing, the committee will proceed to vote on the finding of probable cause before the two complaints are consolidated into one case for submission

Obstacle to justice

Ramos said Gutierrez not only "picked on the one fall guy" but also used her office to obstruct the fairness and reasonable due process.

"For us, Merceditas Gutierrez is an obstacle to justice for farmers," he told the justice committee.

Former Solicitor General Francisco Chavez, another witness for the second impeachment complaint, said he, too, filed four plunder charges in July 2004 in the Ombudsman—one for the fertilizer fund scam, one for the use of public funds in the so-called "Opisyon Movement" during the 2004 elections, and one for the unlawful use of Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA) funds.

Chavez said he had also filed three plunder cases against former military comptroller Carlos Garcia and Jacinto Ligot, and Alfredo Ebarle Group Subpoena.

Act of doing nothing

He said the Ombudsman did not act on all three complaints. "She was monitoring the deflesh act of doing nothing, your honor," he said.

On the Mega Pacific contract, witness Augusto Lagman said the Supreme Court decision invalidated two directives in its dismissal indicting the contract—for the Solicitor General to see in the recovery of the government that was paid Mega Pacific amounting to more than P1 billion, and for the Ombudsman to determine who were liable for the criminal and illegal acts that were committed in the course of the bidding procedures.

Lagman said the first resolution of the Ombudsman on the case only pointed to the culpability of then Comelec Commissioner Resurreccion Borra.

But three months later, he said, the Ombudsman again issued a resolution absolving all the Comelec officials of culpability in the irregular contract.

"In so doing, the Ombudsman did not only not act on it but also reversed the decision of the Supreme Court by saying nobody was guilty thereafter exonerating everyone in the Commission on Elections," Lagman said.

Tupas said the committee would subpoena the records of the cases cited to compare the evidence presented before it.

Tupas earlier described the proceedings as a "farce," saying the majority had no basis for stalling the investigation before the high court had finished its decision.

Meanwhile, calls for Tupas and other lawmakers with pending cases with the Ombudsman to inhibit themselves from the process have mounted.

"If they have any honor, they should inhibit," Gangsan Rep. Rufus Rodriguez said.

He said Tupas was showing a "bias" against Gutierrez.

No heated House debates; aircon off for second straight day

From page A1

For the second straight day, the House of Representatives canceled its floor session after its airconditioning system failed to fix the problem.

Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr. said that while the public would perceive the suspension of sessions were negative, there were practical reasons for the decision.

"The primary task has to windows," Belmonte said. He also pointed out that the primary executive room just one aspect of a lawmaker's work.

"The congressmen are still working in their offices and the committee hearings that is being held adjacent to the main Batasan building is not going on, such as the impeachment hearing," he said.

Bayan Muna Rep. Rodolfo Farinas said it would be a violation of labor and health laws for people to work in a space without ventilation or airconditioners.

"I've had been the spotlight alone is fine. The public would not be able to withstand the heat and would be deprived of their right to observe our sessions," Farinas said.

Minority rebuffs excuses

But other lawmakers, especially those in the minority, rebuffed such excuses.

"Legislative work or public service for that matter should not be hampered by the lack of a cooling system. Physical discomfort is an inconvenience that can be withstood if only to fulfill one's duties," Gabriela Rep. Luzviminda Ilagan said in a text message.

Ilagan pointed out that while lawmakers could not endure this "temporary inconvenience," most Filipinos worked under worse and more dangerous conditions with lesser compensation.

"I would have willingly accepted the heat if only to give my constituents the speech for the unproductive health bill," Ilagan said.

Lilian Rep. Mitagtag Magsaysay of Zambales said she wouldn't mind "holding sessions even under the mango tree because, as legislators, we should be flexible."

Main casualty

The main casualty in the suspension of sessions was the start of the plenary debate on the reproductive health (RH) bill which was supposed to start Tuesday.

Minority Leader Edcel Lagman, the lead RH advocate in the House, considered the delay "unfortunate," noting that this should further spur RH advocates to stand firm.

"This coincidence reinforces our advocacy and resolve to pursue the enactment of the reproductive health bill in order that pregnancy and development should not be left to the contingency of accidental events," Lagman said.

Heidi willing to go back to COA if P-Noy wants her to

From page A1

he was open to inviting Mendoza back to government service, but she had been reluctant.

"In the presence of 22 priests, with the addition of a bishop, I'm saying yes, I'm willing to go back to government," Mendoza said as the applause of the congregation.

Some 500 people, all clad in white, attended the Mass officiated by Manila Archbishop Rodolfo Pabillo and a dozen priests. Among those who prayed with Mendoza were lawmakers Ambassador Simeon Marcelo, Batasan special prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, former military budget officer Lt. Col. George Rabusa and former military officer Ariel Querubin.

Endorsed for COA chair

For Marcelo, the former Ombudsman, there is no better post for Mendoza than the COA, where she had discovered many cases of irregularities, including the conversion of military funds.

"We hope she'll be appointed as the COA chief," said Marcelo, who had worked closely with Mendoza was the head for the plunder case against former military comptroller Carlos Garcia.

He said she had been instrumental to the COA post in 2008 when he was edged out. Marcelo said Mendoza was the best for the post as she was already familiar with the operations and could effect changes during the third seven-year term.

"It's really difficult, but she can do it. It can be done," he said.

"I'm reluctant up to now. I've told people who are recommending [me] to my associates, suggest pahinga po ng kaunti. Si [COA appointee, Ofc.ge in Q an embarrassed, many wife to express support but if I'm not appointed, it's OK," Mendoza said.

Mendoza said she had been approached by some of the members of the Commission on Appointments, including Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, to submit her resume.

"I'm not asking for anything. I'm not pursuing my duty, any case of that can bring further in my office and I will vacate the post," said Mendoza.

During the Mass, Mendoza and Rabusa led candle-lighting rites as a symbol of passing on the courage and determination to stand for the truth.

"To me, this is symbolic, because I know that I have a flickering light and I cannot keep the candle burning. I need you to pass on the light so that we can conquer darkness," Mendoza said before lighting the candle.

Pabillo also called on the people to show a greater support for truth-tellers, noting that those who back people like Mendoza and Rabusa are "well-spoken" and "vocal" in showing their support.

"They can't do this by themselves. One role is important to show them, those in authority, the whole nation, that there are people who stand for people who make a stand," said Pabillo.

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Gadhafi vows to fight 'to the last man, the last woman'

TRIPOLI—Libyan strongman Moammar Gadhafi vowed Wednesday to fight an uprising against his 41-year rule in "the last man, the last woman," as rebels repulsed an attack by his forces on an eastern town.

He spoke at a ceremony of loyalists in the capital Tripoli, time at the UN refugee agency made a plea for hundreds of planes to end a gridlock at the Tunisia border with Libya, where "acres of people" fleeing violence are still waiting to cross in freezing conditions.

Its two UN warships steamed through the Suez Canal toward the Mediterranean and Pentagon officials began flexing their military muscle, Arab League chief Amr Moussa said Libya was saying that the situation in Libya was "catastrophic."

Gadhafi has warned: "Your sacrifices of Libyans" will die if the United States or Nato intervenes in his country.

The United States is moving naval and air forces closer to Libyan shores and is calling for Gadhafi to give up power immediately.

Blaming Al-Qaida

Gadhafi, in a speech broadcast live on state television, blamed Al-Qaida for the uprising, which has seen him lose control of most of Libya's territory, including its main oil fields.

"Sleeper cells from Al-Qaida, its elements, infiltrated gradually ... They believe the world is theirs, they fight everywhere, the intelligence services know them by name," Gadhafi told the ceremony, which was to mark the anniversary of the launch of the People's Committees.

"Suddenly it started in the eastern town of Al Baida ... The sleeping cell was told to attack the battalion ... and it took areas from police stations," said Gadhafi.

"The soldiers went home and left their battalion" while the Al-Qaida cells "took the weapons and control of the town."

"The women fled ... bullets were fired everywhere and the situation in Benghazi," he said of the main eastern city under the control of the rebel forces.

But he said "we will fight to the end, to the last man, the last woman ... with God's help."

The uprising has seen the bloodiest unrest since rebels said they had repelled an attack by Gadhafi's forces in the eastern town of Brega on Wednesday, with witnesses reporting two civilians killed.

The eastern oil hub was one of the biggest to slip into the uprising against Gadhafi's rule on night of Feb. 15.

Residents of Ajdabiya, 200 kilometers southwest of Benghazi, said by telephone that Gadhafi's men had stormed the town with tanks and heavy artillery and that violence fighting had erupted at the port.

"Brega is now under the full control of the revolution," a spokesperson for Ajdabiya said on condition of anonymity.

Air strikes

Libyan warplanes bombed an ammunition depot on the outskirts of the rebel-held eastern town of Ajdabiya, 160 km south of Benghazi. The air force has launched repeated air strikes during the two-week revolt, but all of them appear to have targeted weapons depots in areas controlled by the rebellion.

British Foreign Minister William Hague is to withdraw after fighting in which witnesses said two people were killed, opposition leaders in the rebel-held town of Ajdabiya told AFP.

UNHCR spokesperson Sybella Wilkes told AFP in Geneva that the situation on the Libya-Tunisia border was dire.

"My colleagues on the ground say that acres of people, as far as you can see, are waiting in cars," she said.

"They are outdoors in the freezing cold, under the rain, many of them have spare tires to float rights outside already," said the spokesperson.

More than 300,000 people have already left Libya to escape a vicious crackdown by Gadhafi loyalists which has left at least 1,000 dead, according to a count by the UN's Unhcr.

The USS Enterprise and the USS Ponce carrying marines and equipment entered the Suez Canal early Wednesday, an Egyptian canal authority official said. The warships are expected to enter the Mediterranean by evening.

No-fly zones

Some State countries are drawing up contingency plans should the on the no-fly zones over the Libyan skies. The UN Security Council on the 1990s to ensure the international community decides to impose an air embargo over Libya, diplomats said Wednesday.

Nato has already said that any such move would require a clear mandate from the UN Security Council. But Britain, are unlikely drawing up contingency plans to prevent Gadhafi's air force from carrying out air strikes against the rebels.

British Prime Minister David Cameron, a leading advocate of the no-fly option, said it was unacceptable for Gadhafi to "be murdering his own people, using aeroplanes and helicopter gun ships and the like."

London said a no-fly zone did not necessarily require UK approval, but new Female Foreign Minister Alain Juppe ruled out military action without a clear UN backing, and Russia opposes the idea.

"There is no unanimity within Nato for the use of armed forces," US Defense Secretary Robert Gates said in Washington.

Allowing a UN mandate could prove difficult, with the foreign ministry of Russia, a veto-wield- ing member of the Security Council, dismissing talk of a no-fly zone as "superfluous."

"We also have to think about frankly the use of the UN military in another country in the Middle East," US Defense Secretary Robert Gates said.

The diplomats, who could not be named due to the sensitivity of the issue, said the options being looked into are modeled on the no-fly zone which the Nato's air force in Bosnia imposed over Bosnia in 1993 that had a UN mandate.

They also said Nato's aerial attack on Serbia in 1999—which did not have the UN Security Council mandate—in response to the crackdown in ethnic Albanian nationalists in Kosovo. The onslaught ended after 78 days with Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic agreeing to withdraw his forces from Kosovo.

But an EU official noted that taking control of the airspace over Libya would more likely be modeled on Operation Deny Flight, a 1993-95 Nato mission in Bosnia that involves patrolling the skies over Bosnia as a civil war raged between government forces and Serb secessionists.

"I believe it could be successful also in Libya, because it would prevent bombing ... or war planes from Gadhafi's control," British Foreign Minister Frances Fentiz told the F Blackpapers newspapers in Sunday.

Moussa described the situation in Libya as "catastrophic" as foreign ministers meeting in Cairo prepared for talks on having military intervention against Gadhafi's regime.

The Libyan crisis is an internal Arab affair and foreign powers should refrain from any transgressions, Iraq's foreign minister Hoshyar Zebari said after a meeting of the Arab League, which has suspended Gadhafi's government. Reports from AFP and AP

1,200 Pinoys sail to safety on luxury ship to Crete, Greece

From page A1

"The scene to be getting worse by the day."

The Ionian Queen chartered by the Philippine government departed at 7:20 p.m. Tuesday (1:20 a.m. Wednesday Manila time) with 1,208 Filipino evacuees bound for the Greek island of Crete, or around 500 less than its intended number of passengers, said Department of Labor and Employment spokesperson Rizza Paniza-Cruz.

Those who remained were mostly medical workers from the eastern Libyan town of Ajdabiya. "Maybe they saw that it was safe for them and so they decided to stay," Paniza-Cruz said.

It statements issued by Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario yesterday said that "conditions have somewhat normalized in Benghazi," which has fallen under rebel control, "thanks and efforts have spread and police are back in the streets."

Buttressing said hundreds of Filipinos continued to clip out of Libya overland through its northern with Egypt and Tunisia.

"The ferry boarding was orderly. Members of Filipino families boarded first, followed by those passengers who were sick," Buttressing said.

"It's a luxury ferry and the food was free. They're sailing to Heraklion in Crete, where Philippine Embassy and labor officials are going to take care of them, including their accommodation and food," he said.

"From there, they will go to where from where they will be booked for various flights home," he added.

DFA slammed

At a hearing yesterday of the House committee on overseas workers affairs, lawmaker Representative Bhagyapur lamented that 20,000 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) trapped in Libya were "practically on their own."

Magsaysay said that the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) had no concrete plans for the evacuation of the OFWs. She said most of the Filipinos who were able to leave Libya managed with the help of their employers and not the government.

"The DFA has done a miserable job in the Libya crisis. They should have been the first to act on the crisis before it became too late. They were lacking in urgency and leadership in handling the Middle East turmoil. I did not know that we had a Philippine Ambassador to Libya (Alejandrino Ventura) and the situation had gone out of hand," Magsaysay said.

She said members of the committee had attempted to contact the DFA phone lines repeatedly dedicated for stranded OFWs in Libya but could not get through because the lines were busy.

Magsaysay urged the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa) to allocate P500 million out of its funds for the use of OFWs in Libya and other countries in turmoil.

"The Owwa should set up this fund even without the approval of the President. This money comes from the $25-a-year shares of each OFW and one of the access of this kind is for their evacuation from countries in turmoil," Magsaysay said.

Glitch operational

Budget Secretary Florencio Abad said in a statement yesterday that operational issues, not funding, was the problem.

"These operational issues are largely due to the emergency nature of the activity and the difficulty and uncertainty of operations due to risks to life and limb, as well as the difficulty of access. This is the bigger problem that government faces, not funding," Abad said.

He said that the main source of repatriation expenses was the P2.3-billion Overseas Filipino Workers Trust Fund established by the Davao rehab fund released P500 million for the Libya emergency.

In addition, Abad said that the DBM had at the "minimum," an available balance of P136.7 million from the Assistance to Nationals fund and at the "maximum" it can use P187.8 million, which he described as the balance of the lump-sum fund for the implementation of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos' Act of 1995.

President satisfied

Palace deputy spokesperson Abigail Valte said that President Aquino was satisfied with the way the DFA was handling the evacuation and repatriation of Filipino workers in Libya.

"The President sent the officers made by the DFA and setting Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario," Valte said, noting that people appreciated the trip of the 71-year-old diplomat to Libya over the objections of his family on Friday to lead the evacuation and repatriation of 458 workers there.

DFA spokesperson Eduardo Malaya yesterday said 9,211 Filipinos had fled Libya and that the department assisted all of them "one way or another"—providing food and money, travel papers and making flight arrangements. Four violence erupted in Libya in mid-February, 958 of them have arrived in Manila, but he reminded that Nationals fund and at the "maximum" it can use P187.8 million over the past several weeks from Libya.

SURVIVOR PHILIPPINES Filipino workers evacuated from Libya waving it up upon their arrival at Nnoy Aquino International Airport on Wednesday. More than 1,000 Filipinos have been evacuated from Libya since violence escalated in the North African state, according to a press release from the Department of Foreign Affairs. Government data also showed that an estimated 26,000 Filipinos work in medical, construction, and oil and gas sectors there. REUTERS

DELGRADO

Employers to return 13,000

Briefing reporters on other evacuations in Libya overland, Buttressing announced 500 Filipinos from Tobruk crossed the Egyptian border going to Alexandria.

"They will be met by consular officials if they need travel documents. The consular here have been activated," he said.

In the west, 1,241 Filipinos sheltered in Tripoli crossed the Tunisian border in a convoy of buses going to Djerba. He said another group of 150 had arrived in Tripoli and requested their travel repatriation.

"There are an estimated 26,000 OFWs in Libya and 13,013 of them are supposed to be repatriated by their employers. (The government) will take care of the balance," Buttressing said.

Some companies have asked the Philippines for help in return the Filipinos, but others have simply abandoned the workers, he said.

Buttressing said in Wuhi near the Tunisia border, 19 Filipinos had requested government aid through Migrante International.

"It looked like they were abandoned by their employers. They were the President saying that they will be repatriated and (with the lack of government assistance) but the (DFA) was able to send a team and brought them over the border to Tunisia," Buttressing said.

Labor Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz on Monday said that those who failed to repatriate their workers would be asked to refund the government for the cost of evacuating their employees. With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Christine O. Hernandez, DJ Yap, Norman Bordadora and Jerry E. Esplanada

How they fled Libya by climbing 10-foot wall

From page A1

ple will die in that place," and the Filipino who asked that he be identified only as Jim, a 42-year-old cook.

Elmer Guillermo, 45, his three children—Joll, 16, Marish, 15, and Lee Ann, 13,—and three other teenagers entrusted to her by a friend were among the 51 who arrived yesterday.

Brotherhood of Filipinos

Guillermo said her safety of persons left her thankful to the Philippine government for assisting them and to her fellow Filipinos who helped her through the ordeal.

"I saw how we really could depend on other Filipinos. It was like a brotherhood," Guillermo said.

The 51 were among 198 Filipinos assisted by the Philippine Embassy in Tripoli in leaving the country for neighboring Tunisia.

Since violence broke out in Libya last month, more than 700 Filipinos have returned to the Philippines, according to Manila airport authorities. Hundreds more repatriated by their former employers. (See story on Page A1.)

Guillermo said her husband Gabriel, a consultant at Gradbuck Engineering, a petroleum company in Tripoli, chose to stay behind to help others. They belong to the Iglesia ni Cristo sect.

Her daughter Lee-Ann said: "All the sacrifices will be overseas. In our religion, he has a responsibility to his brothers."

'Like a nightmare'

Guillermo said her family lived in a rented house at a "quiet" private locality.

"It was frantic, it was almost, but we feared that the silence around the chaos was about to begin," she said. "In the 16 years I spent there, this is the first time we had such violence. I couldn't believe it. My friends said this is just a dream. It was like a nightmare."

Guillermo said she and the teenagers went to the Philippine Embassy, which arranged their transport to the Tunisian border.

"The driver we hired was kind," she said. "I knew Arabic, so I could talk to the driver. He was like a brother. He kept telling me, 'Don't worry and I'll be able to get out safely,'" she said.

Along the way, the said her group had to go through 24 checkpoints. Fortunately, they did not experience harassment from the armed guards or protesters. They only had to surrender their cellphones and laptops, she said.

Chaos at the border

But at the Tunisian border, the scene was chaos, Guillermo said.

"At first, the crowd was still sparse, so we had to walk around all the sleeping people of other nationalities. Then the crowd began to get thicker and thicker until the point where it seemed only half my body could go through," she said.

Guillermo said her group decided going through the gates was too risky.

"We had to climb the wall," she said.

Guillermo said she had to appeal among her the children "because if they saw me looking weak, the others the kids would weaken, too."

At that point, the Filipinos grouped each other up, using shoulders and arms to allow the others to get through.

Dangerous

"It was dangerous. Imagine little kids, imagine 1-year-old, 3-year-old kids, we all help each other to their weight so they could cross," Jim said.

He said some of the other nationalities were even "taking advantage" of the women. "When we reached, the Filipinos just said never mind, in they could all cross quickly."

Jim said upon reaching the Philippine Embassy in Tunisia, the group was taken to a shelter, and then refreshed by bus to the airport.

Lexus Launches World's First Luxury Full Hybrid Compact, the CT200h

The Philippines recently became one of the first countries to introduce the world's first luxury full hybrid compact vehicle. Lexus Manila, the official distributor, announced the arrival of the CT200h in a star-studded event held at the Peninsula Manila last February 21, 2011.

Lexus enthusiasts of all ages and distinguished media friends were in attendance as Lexus Manila took the wraps off their newest hybrid vehicle in the by-invitation-only event. It featured the talents of world-renowned singer/songwriter David Pomeranz. Mr. Pomeranz, together with the "Divine Diva" Zsa Zsa Padilla and "Concert Queen" Pops Fernandez, enthralled the packed crowd with renditions of their hit songs as the baby in the Lexus hybrid lineup, the CT200h, established its place alongside its larger siblings, the RX450h SUV and the flagship of the Lexus family, the LS600hL.

With a focus on performance, the Sport hybrid provides a sporty ride and an aggressive edge without sacrificing any of the traits that make it a genuine Lexus: comfort, practicality, refinement, and luxuriousness. With an innovative "2 moods, 2 modes" selector, owners can be treated to two very different cars rolled into one as the CT200h switches from ECO to SPORT mode, adjusting to the driver's intended driving style.

In ECO mode, the CT200h behaves as a typical Lexus hybrid vehicle would, focusing on fuel economy and providing a serene ride. The combination of an innovative 1.8L Atkinson cycle engine and powerful permanent magnet electric motors allows the hybrid to reach a fuel economy of up to 24.4km/L (combined).

In SPORT mode however, the other side of the coin becomes clear, interior lighting is replaced with a passionate red that embodies the difference that has just been unleashed. In SPORT mode, the Sport hybrid defies existing preconceptions about hybrid vehicles, firming up the electric power steering to provide a very direct steering feel, and boosting electric motor performance from 500V to its maximum capacity of 650V. This reaches a combined output of 134hp; the result of which, is seamless and rapid acceleration.

In addition, traction control and vehicle stability control are dialed down and the CT200h allows the driver to gain complete power over the car—perfect for tight switchbacks and moments of road heroism.

The CT200h's performance slant can be attributed to the arrival of the CT200h F-Sport. This is the first time the F-Sport—the Lexus skunk works performance division (responsible for the IS-F and the LFA)—has set foot on Philippine shores. F-Sport used their extensive experience building hyper cars to breathe a new character onto the CT200h, endowing it with newly developed lateral performance dampers that provide added stability and increased chassis rigidity without any compromise in refinement, ride comfort, or luxuriousness.

As the night came to a close, and the trio of David Pomeranz, Zsa Zsa Padilla, and Pops Fernandez belted their last melody, the CT200h stood proud and took its place on stage, alongside the star-studded cast, proving without any doubt that Lexus is indeed the leader in luxury full hybrid technology.

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Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

Across the NATION

Purisima confirmation stopped over unpaid power plant taxes

By TJ Burgonio
in Manila
and Dodie T. Mutia Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

FINANCE Secretary Cesar Purisima's confirmation by the Commission on Appointments (CA) was held hostage yesterday by lawmakers supporting a campaign by one of them to collect at least P6.1 billion in taxes allegedly owed by a power plant in Quezon province.

Malacañang is treading cautiously on the matter because payment would set a precedent and pave the way for the settlement of more than P16 billion in tax liabilities by other provinces hosting power plants.

Members of the House of Representatives showed up two hours late into the 9 a.m. proceedings of the CA to express solidarity with Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez.

Held hostage

When they came, the interpellators of Purisima dragged into mid-afternoon. Nine senators—a majority—would be further questioned later, the body approved a motion to decide on his fate on March 14.

"I think they just wanted to know what my position is on unpaid taxes," Purisima later told reporters.

The CA committee on finance, chaired by Sen. Ralph Recto, convened at around 10:30 a.m. for Purisima's appointment without any congressman present, except for Suarez who came to oppose Purisima's confirmation.

Quezon Gov. David Suarez, Representative Suarez's son, on Monday again issued an ultimatum to Team Energy, operator of the 735-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Pagbilao town, to pay the P6.1 billion in taxes or face auction of pieces of its property.

Governor Suarez said the bidding on March 9 would proceed unless the plant operator pays.

The 2008 Sual power plant is in his friend-in-Congress Rodaney Palo in Pagbilao facing Tayabas Bay.

Glaring absence

Representative Suarez said Purisima's position were detrimental to the country's fiscal situation because he opposed the payment of realty taxes to Quezon for the Pagbilao plant.

Sen. Joker Arroyo noticed the congressman's absence. "I notice that there is no congressman around here," said Arroyo.

At past 11 a.m., Representative Bolet Bolet, Reginaldo Lubo(Bibit), Simeon Datumanong, Luis Villafuerte, Antonio Abayon, Daniel Reyes, Arturo del Rosario, Nes Estrellador, Ernesto Mailliet, Roberto Mercado, Pedro Nunezdela and Rodolfo Antonino arrode into the room.

Representative Suarez and the Quezon provincial government were open to a compromise on the issue.

"What we're asking for is limited," said the elder Suarez, who had claimed responsibility for paying for a P3 million dinner in New York for ex-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The Pagbilao plant was built under a build-operate-transfer agreement between Team Energy Corp. and Napocor in which Napocor agreed to assume the plant's tax obligations.

Napocor, however, later claimed it was exempt from paying local taxes. The Supreme Court has ruled against it.

SURFING PH
The waves of Baler, Aurora, which made their debut in the French Fred Coppola film "Apocalypse Now," are expected to draw beach lovers as Dec dry season approaches. ALVIN BALTAZAR/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Salt water damages 7,000 ha of C. Luzon farms

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Salt water from Manila Bay has damaged some 7,000 hectares of rice lands in the coastal villages of Pampanga, Bulacan and Bataan in the last few years, forcing farmers to convert more than 1,000 ha of those lands into fishponds.

Cases of saltwater intrusion in communities at the mouth of the Pampanga River have been steadily occurring during high tides in summer, said Reynaldo Ongsangco, director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in Central Luzon.

"There is sea (level) rise, which is an effect of global warming," Ongsangco said in a telephone interview on Tuesday.

He said reports indicated that seawater has submerged farmlands in Hagonoy, Macabebe and Masantol towns in Pampanga; Hagonoy and Calumpit towns in Bulacan; and Mariveles and Orani towns in Bataan.

The cases have become frequent in the last two years and worse when waters from upper Pampanga River and high tide from the Manila Bay meet at the mouth of the river, said Wenceslao Lacap Jr., former vice mayor of Masantol and a fish pond owner.

The BFAR has helped farmers cope by developing hatcheries for saltwater tilapia fingerlings.

"Tilapia is a freshwater fish. But these are made to adapt to high levels of saline water," Ongsangco said.

The farmers have become receptive to the idea, he said.

The Manila Bay Regional Development Plan in Central Luzon targets an increase in agriculture productivity and farming income. —Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

Wine on the table, mayor on the label

By Edison delos Angeles
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—At dinner to celebrate this city's 74th Charter Day there was something absent on the red wine that could have sparked many appetites—the face of Mayor Michael Rama on the bottle.

Rama, criticized for lavish spending for the weeklong Charter Day celebration, said he found nothing wrong with serving wine that featured his face during the P5.4 million Feb. 24 dinner at the posh Casino Español Restaurant on Ramon Street.

Rama, in a phone interview, said the bottles of wine served during the Feb. 24 dinner were actually part of his campaign gimmick in the May election last year.

"Some are asking for wine so I let it out. I mean, why should we buy when I still have some?" Rama said.

The "Michael Rama" bottles of wine were served during the testimonial dinner hosted by the city to celebrate its 74th Charter Day anniversary and evergreen individuals who made outstanding contributions to the city's growth and development.

The mayor's face appeared on labels of Don Mariano Vino de Mesa wine, along with his campaign slogan "Together, we make things happen."

Above his picture was the finish: Orlando Pundit Kumwagan (BOPK) acronym with the Cebu City Hall façade in the background. BOPK is Visayan political party.

The bottles drew sharp criticism from about 1,100 guests when they were laid on the table for the eight-course dinner inside a function room of Casino Español.

"What is that? Is he campaigning already?" one guest asked.

Rama, however, said he didn't see what the fuss is. "The city didn't spend for that," said the mayor. "That was from me."

POUR WINE! Items this bottle and its greatest of the mayor's face on its label.

DILG chief orders probe of death of NPA suspect

By Mar S. Arguelles, Roy Stead and Joel Escalona Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LEGAZPI CITY—Was a purported leader of the New People's Army in Bicol killed in a legitimate encounter or abducted before he was killed by government troopers on Feb. 21?

Amid conflicting claims of the military and human rights and militant groups on the real cause of death of Elmer Estrellado, 34, Local Government Secretary Jesse Robredo directed the police on Tuesday to conduct a thorough investigation.

He said an investigation could determine the real circumstances behind the suspected rebel's death.

Robredo said: "In the interest of objectivity I really want to know the real score."

In a press conference held at the wake of Estrellado at the Evangelical Church here on Monday, his wife Aldyn said her husband was abducted on Feb. 21 by four armed men who introduced themselves as operatives of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

Joan Penna, Bayan Muna Bicol regional coordinator, said Bodet was walking home in Multiplex Albay after leaving rented for his family at the food market when he was forced to board a gray car with license plate MDN 903.

Police Chief Supt. Clemente Bautista, director of the Bicol police, said Estrellado was killed in a clash in Bato town.

Bautista's right group said Bodet and Elmer were one and the same person and that Bodet was abducted in Albay, brought to Camarines Sur and killed there before a report on the supposed clash was made.

Lawyer Marlouna Gay Ilan, counsel for the Estrellados, said the family was preparing to file a murder case against military officials who allegedly concocted the clash story in Bato in order to cover up the extrajudicial killing of Estrellado.

"Images that appeared having killed in an encounter a certain Estrellado at around 8:30 a.m. while Bodet was abducted two and a half hours (later) at 9 a.m.," she said.

In a radio interview, Lt. Col. Ernesto Cruz, commanding officer of the Army's 42nd Infantry Battalion, said a village council in Bato issued a resolution certifying that a clash occurred there.

The clash was supposed to have occurred in the village of Balisang in Bato. It is 10 kilometers from the town proper.

3 cops learn Facebook nudity not cool to PNP bosses

By Melvin B. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

KIDAPAWAN—The social network site Facebook, which has been injured by the Philippine National Police to keep track of and help arrest criminals, has caught a rookie policeman here literally with his pants down.

Three policemen, including the rookie, are now facing dismissal from the service for uploading the nude photo of one of them to Facebook.

They were identified as police officers 1 Roland Rivera, Christian Ray Gallodo and Jay R. Evangelio.

Rivera uploaded to his Facebook account the nude photo of Gallodo. Rivera and Evangelio were also in the photo with Gallodo but they were clothed.

'Just for fun'

Gallodo claimed that he did not know the photo would be uploaded.

Chief Supt. Clemente Bautista, Western Mindanao police director, said Rivera and Evangelio were police aides.

"They claimed it was just for fun. But that is not acceptable because it can be seen by anyone," Bautista said.

He said the behavior was "unsuited for" and tainted the reputation of the PNP.

Unbecoming of an officer

Rivera, Gallodo and Evangelio have been ordered to the regional police headquarters in Camp Siongco Delgado here pending an investigation, said Bautista.

He said the three would be liable for conduct unbecoming of an officer.

The three, who admitted to posting the photo online, were undergoing field training program at the regional police training school in Datu Odin Sinsuat town when the photo was taken and eventually uploaded to Facebook.

The Facebook accounts of the policemen have been deactivated last week, according to a statement of the PNP regional office.

Police-related matters

Quezon has directed each commander to warn their men against uploading indecent photos, video and other materials online.

He reminded police scalawags that most of the batterers by policemen on duty was allegedly only for police-related matters.

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Dairy farm faces market challenge

By Marian Briccio
Multiply, ABS-CBN

THE SIGHT of black-and-white cows eating luscious green grasses may somehow make you feel you are in New Zealand or Australia, but that is actually a local scene, or the first commercial cow farm in Bicol.

Located at the upland village of Causuway in Albay's Malilipot town, Causway Dairy Farm started operations almost two years ago, in August 2009.

The Bicolandia Dairy Authority (BDA), in its aim to regulate the selling of foreign-branded fresh milk in the Philippines and to maintain the importance of drinking fresh milk, has given a license to its first dairy supervised by even imported cows and produce fresh milk for the community.

Twenty cows from New Zealand were brought to Bicol to jump-start the milk farm. All of the animals are crossbreeds of The Netherlands breed Holstein and the Pakistani breed Sahiwal.

According to farm owner Junie Bueno, cross-breeding is done to ensure that the cows will thrive in the Philippines' tropical weather.

"The milking breed Holstein can only survive in cold climates, but when you mix it with the Sahiwal breed, it can survive in our Philippine weather," Bueno explains.

All of the cows were brought to Batangas by sea and brought to San Jerome town in Pampanga for quarantine before they were transported to Albay.

Preparations

It took almost a year and a half to prepare the facilities of the 32-hectare dairy farm before it was declared ready for operation. A small portion of the property was used to grow grasses for the cows, while most of the ground is used as enclosure for the cows to graze walk all day and eat grass.

All the cows have been bought over a year-long period before operations were fully-blast.

"We have milking machines, pressure washers, quality containers and baby refrigerators so that we can make sure that we will be able to produce good milk quality," Bueno says.

Moreover, he says, the farm invested on feed for the cows. It buys banana pellets from Naga City and gives quality grasses to make the cows healthier.

"Our cows are a mixture of foreign grasses, foods, vitamins and mineral mixes. Where all these are combined, highest milk production is obtained," Bueno says.

Class A

Based on tests conducted by the BDA, the farm produces Class A milk, which means that it maintains high-quality standards in milk production.

"When the demand for fresh milk increases, the farm is forced to "challenge feed" the cows and give them more feed.

Causway was the chosen site because it is cold even during hot days and the soil is perfect for planting grasses and trees.

Cows are milked twice a day and an estimated 160 liters is produced. They are first fed and cleaned before they are milked so they can produce more liters and ensure good milk quality.

"We already use a milking machine to do away with the cruder method of hand-milking. It is faster and it can get more milk from the cows," says Abel Ida, who is in charge of the dairy farm.

He says that the highest milk produced gives them 27 liters in two milking sessions. After going through the machine, the milk is transferred to sorted containers and placed inside coolers.

"Fresh milk usually expires after five days unlike commercial milk products which can last for a month. Pressing the milk a week's expected to keep it from spoiling," Bueno says.

According to him, this is the first dairy farm in Bicol where 25 cows are concentrated in one place. Most of the dairy farms in the region are run by cooperatives and the cows are distributed to members who take them home and take care of them.

"They hand-milk their own cows and bring the milk to their cooperatives," Bueno says.

He claims Causway Dairy Farm has facilities compared with other dairy farms because they use new machines and equipment.

Cow diaries

In their study, scientists from Australia found that giving names to cows increases milk production. The same strategy is adopted at Causway.

"We gave them names so that we can have a personal interaction with them and they will feel that they are living in a peaceful environment," Bueno says.

Some of the cows are named Ava, Berlina, Helewing, Josie, Eva and Rizza. They are named alphabetically based on when they were born to the calves.

Farm hands 'call out the cows' names when it is time for milking and the cows easily respond.

The farm management also makes sure that the environment is clean and stress-free so that the animals are treated healthier and can give more milk.

Marketing problem

Bueno says the farm's biggest problem is marketing their milk. Many people in the locality are not used to drinking fresh cow's milk so they do not usually patronize the products, he says.

"We have an outlet at Tabaco City where we offer milk at P15 per glass. At first, many people wanted to try it, but after a few many months, we had fewer customers. Perhaps their stomachs are not just used to fresh milk," he says.

The main market is the feeding program of the Tabaco city government, which provides pasteurized milk to undernourished students in elementary schools. The target children are not yet used to commercial milk products.

Causway Dairy Farm currently sell fresh milk at P45 per liter, but customers may buy pasteurized and chocolate milk in packs, which are cheaper. Infant pasteurization is done to avoid killing the nutrients in the milk.

"We see information dissemination campaigns to spread the importance of drinking fresh milk, especially for children. We also have radio advertisements to promote our products," Bueno says.

Dr. Junior Lopez, MDA area manager for Southern Luzon, says the farm was primarily established for stock production. Later, he says, the cows will be dispersed to farm cooperatives.

"We are doing this nationwide to keep at those are interested individuals who are ready to support dairy development," Lopez adds.

> Bicolano consumers are just not used to drinking fresh cow's milk, says Causway Dairy Farm owner

Church takes active role vs Palawan mining

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE CATHOLIC Church in Puerto Princesa yesterday said it has joined the campaign to collect 10 million signatures against mining in Palawan to help convince a mission left behind by dam-promoting advocate Gen. Jaime Ortega.

Bishop Pedro Arigo, vicar apostolic of Puerto Princesa, expressed optimism that the campaign would be able to help counter the unrelied arguments "because more people are aware of the destruction mining brings to communities."

Arigo's statement was posted yesterday on CBCP News, the official news service of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

The signature campaign, initiated by the multisectoral environmental coalition Save Palawan Movement, started on Feb. 3, after the killing of "Dre Jerry."

Ortega, also a radio commentator, was shot dead while sleeping in a stand-alone room in Puerto Princesa City after work late January.

2 ex-governors

The gunman has been arrested while murder charges have been filed against former Governors Joel Reyes of Palawan and Jesus Antonio Carreon of Marinduque for alleged involvement in the murder of Ortega.

Bishop Arigo said on Jan. 24, Palawan and the world lost a good man.

"[He was] a tireless advocate for environmental protection and a fearless critic of a cabal of corrupt officials," the 72-year old bishop said.

He said when Ortega was alive, he warned residents to use the mat fuse of Palawan, which was being ravaged and disembowelled because of selfish mining interests."

"He also heralded the existence of some government leaders whose main concern is not the welfare of Palawanites and of the whole province but of the money that finds its way into their pockets," added Arigo.

Support from Manila

Aside from gaining support from the Church, the signature campaign also obtained the backing of the Manila City council, which has recently passed a resolution urging city residents to help in gathering 10 million signatures.

Presidential Assistant recently ordered a stop to the processing of new mining applications in the province following a chance to stop mining down to the wake of Ortega's murder.

Ms. Aquino said the government will no longer process more than 300 applications for mining claims pending at the Bureau of Mines of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"We will support whatever is the position of the community. While they need to economically benefit from mining projects, they are also the ones to suffer if anything goes wrong," the President was quoted as saying in a recent visit to Puerto Princesa.

308 applications

Aquino also said that the more than 300 applications for concessions pending at the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, that cover potential mining areas virtually in the entire Palawan mainland, will no longer be processed.

"There are about 356 applications on Palawan that we are looking through and I think that will no longer push through," he said.

"I tell them to you. If president like it let's see do it," he added.

He promised to always consult people who live on the path of mining projects, citing other opportunities for investments such as tourism.

The President was reacting to the initiative launched by civil society groups in Palawan following the recent murder of Ortega.

A YOUNG spectator peers as a parade of floats for the Panagbenga passes by. Cases of thefts during the festival kept police awake.

Cops nab 14 suspects in Baguio theft cases

BAGUIO CITY—Police have arrested 14 people, including a suspected of being part of a group of pickpockets who preyed on tourists at last week's Baguio Flowers Festival parades.

Supt. Aldrey Villafor, city police chief, said the suspects, all residents of Barangay Alno first here, were aboard a public utility jeep (PUJ) that came from Bagulo and that was flagged down by policemen here.

Villafor said police were warned from the suspects several ATM and credit cards and belongings of other people and an undetermined amount of cash.

He said the suspected leader of the group, Zenaida Fernando, 52, has at least three arrest warrants for robbery and theft issued by a court in Alaminos City, Pangasinan. One of those arrested, Jason Franco, also has an arrest warrant for robbery and theft issued by a court in this city.

Villafor said police flagged down the PUJ owned by the suspects after receiving information that Fernando's group was operating here. From Baguio City, they hunted down guests of tourists during the Flowers Festival.

"They went to Baguio on Friday to take advantage of the Panagbenga Festival," he said.

Villafor said he asked local children to distrust strangers.

Fernando denied she led the crime group, saying she and companions went to Baguio as tourists.

Fernando, however, said her daughter, Jenny Ann Fernando, who eluded arrest, could have been involved in petty theft because she would often go out alone while they were in Baguio.

"We only were around Burnham Park, enjoying the sights. Jenny is involved here," she said. "She's lost. You see, she eluded arrest."

Zenaida and her daughter were conveyed in three separate patrol by the Alaminos court.

The other suspects said they were not thieves and merely joined the Fernandos.

"We just hitched a ride with the Fernandos as we ran your Baguio," said Cherry Gaspar who was with along her 10-year old son. "Would I bring along my son if I planned to commit a crime?" Gaspar said.

In Baguio City police arrested 18 suspected pickpockets and recovered seven cases of theft from 9th 20-28. The highlight of the marching Panagbenga happened on 9th, 26 and 27, featuring street dancing and floral floats. The festival ended on March 6.

Insp. Ramonito Ita Jones, Baguio police spokesperson, said the number of thefts could be higher because many cases were unreported.

Ita Jones said most of the people arrested were not residents of Baguio City.

On Sunday, Surplus took more than P500,000 worth of laptop computers, mobile phones and cash from hotel rooms occupied by guests and neighbors from Nueva Vizcaya.

Police said the 13 employees were attending a seminar and left their rooms at the Rajah Solimon Hotel and ripped off at 8 p.m. When they returned at 6:30 p.m., they found most of the break in. Armand Sichang, Inquirer Central Luzon, and Elmer Kristian Bonoyo, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Police locate, raid marijuana farm in Batangas

By Marvil Gisha Lozada
Inquirer Southern Luzon

BATANGAS CITY—Police raided a farm in Bano-bano village in Lemery town in Batangas and seized 67 fully grown marijuana plants, authorities said.

At least 100 other smaller marijuana plants were burned after they were uprooted, said Senior Insp. Apolinario Lunar Jr., chief of the Lemery police.

He said a municipal-level provincial personnel conducted the raid in Sitio Dubat at around 9 a.m. on Monday.

The seized marijuana plants were found on a 200-square-meter land, part of a 500-square-meter piece of property owned by an unidentified person who had already died, said PO3 Michael Evans.

The plants were sent to the police crime laboratory said Office.

He said the land's caretaker, identified as Ernesto Calello, eluded arrest.

Calello was a resident of Barangay Bonbon in Agoncillo town.

Lunar said one marijuana plant, whose leaves had already been dried, could be sold by as much as P3,000 while the street value of the plant is P50,000 per tea bag.

It was the first such raid conducted in the village and in Lemery town, he added.

Police filed charges of violation of Republic Act No. 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act against Calello.

Woman pleads: 'Show my husband, dead or alive'

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Lourdes Bautista has no idea who abducted her husband, Jory, an environmental activist and radio host, in Aurora on March 3 five years ago.

But to Jory's abductors, he will be less a pleas. "I hope that his abductors would confess Jory, alive or dead, so we can finally see him. It's difficult explaining to our children where he is. If I say he's dead, they'll ask, 'Where is her buried?' or 'Why are we not visiting him?' If he's alive, they'll ask, 'Why are we not seeing him?'" Bautista said in a telephone interview from Baler, Aurora, on Tuesday.

Jory, as secretary general of the Alliance of Progressive Lawyers (MSSG), led campaigns against logging, mining and commercial shrimp farming in Aurora. On the 3:30 PM, he host of the weekly program, "Ang Tinig ng Bayan."

Four armed men abducted him on March 3, 2006, as he emerged at around 7 p.m. from an Internet café on Burgos and San Luis Streets in Baler.

Witnesses told police they saw the armed men have Jory in hand. A heavily dented minivan his Jeep was that did not have license plates.

Government soldiers were suspected to have taken Jory. Four days before the abduction, Jory charged four soldiers from surveilling a forum and campaign planning on Charter change in secret.

In a text message to the lawyers that day, Jory identified two of those who hanged in the forum as 2nd Lt. Dennis Hidalgo and one Sergeant Bandoy.

Col. Joselito Kakilala, then commander of the Army's 48th Infantry Battalion operating in Aurora, denied his men had a role in the abduction.

"I hope whoever took Jory would free their conscience of guilt. I hope they dig to me information on where they took or buried my husband. I hope they take pity on my children," said Gabriela.

Efforts by the Catholic Prelature of Infanta, Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and other groups to locate him failed, she said.

The MSSG and the non-government organizations Bataris are observing the anniversary of Jory's disappearance with Mass at the site of the abduction, Bataris executive director Alfonso van Tuß said.

Fidelito Bryan, Inquirer Central Luzon

JORY ILIO Diaz, missing since 2006

Money, Islam conversion free kidnapped nurse

ZAMBOANGA CITY—It took an undetermined amount of money and a conversion to Islam for kidnappers to release a 23-year-old nurse snatched two months ago, authorities said the victim said.

Senior Supt. Edwin de Ocampo, acting city police chief, said Maria Chris Ingrahil Guarnecon was handed over to her mother, Elena, in Ateka town in Zamboanga Sibugay around 7 p.m. on Monday.

He said police learned that the family gave an undisclosed amount of money to the kidnappers.

"She is okay and in high spirits but what we gathered was the family gave the ransom money to the captors," Dr. Ocampo said.

Guarnecon returned home on Tuesday and was immediately presented to the media.

The nurse was snatched in her home in Mercedes on Feb. 14 by at least seven armed men.

The kidnappers shot dead her 70-year-old grandfather, Jesus, as they took Guarnecon with them.

Chief Insp. Hipolito de Asis, Western Mindanao police director, said the suspects in Guarnecon's kidnapping were identified as belonging to the group of a certain Pastang Mohtadam.

But he said they were not the Sayyaf members as authorities had suspected.

Guarnecon said her captors spoke Tausug and Maguindanao and that she was initially brought to the mountains of Sumisip.

RELEASED bishop visits Maria Chris Guarnecon (with red) talks to the media and reveals her ordeal in the hands of her kidnappers, including her conversion to Islam which she said she now adores seriously.

"The kidnappers treated me well," said Guarnecon. "Look at me. I am now fat. They even called me Princess."

Guarnecon said if there was one good thing that happened to her while in captivity was her decision to convert to Islam.

She admitted that she initially decided to do so to protect herself.

"I am a woman and they were all males. But my sincerity, I was bound Islam," Guarnecon said.

But she said that later on, she became serious in her conversion.

Guarnecon, who now calls herself Hamnes, said she had not bothered to take off her hijab (head scarf) since.

"I am a devout Catholic but if she is happy with that, I have no choice but to accept it," her mother said.

Authorities have been helpless against kidnappings in many parts of Mindanao, prompting the police department to order an investigation.

Several lawmakers also demanded the resignation of top military and police officials in areas where kidnappings were being committed with impunity. Julie Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

Lawyers join outcry vs SC ruling on cities

LAWYERS and academics have joined city mayors in clamor for the Supreme Court justices to explain their decision allowing the conversion into cities of towns that failed to meet requirements set by the Local Government Code.

"Is the Local Government Code still valid?" asked Fred Edmund Tayao, executive director of the Local Government Development Foundation (Logodef) in a round-table forum on oil-based held in Quezon City recently.

Tayao said members of the academe and experts on governance were astonished when the Supreme Court flip-flopped for the third time, on its earlier decision rejecting the creation of 16 new cities due to violation of the Constitution and the Local Government Code.

"We are wondering if the Local Government Code still functions as the enabling law that governs the creation of cities and other geo-political units," he said.

Tayao said that the Constitution provides that "no province, city, municipality, or barangay may be created, divided, merged, abolished, or its boundary substantially altered, except in accordance with the criteria established in the local government code.

Under the Local Government Code, as amended by Republic Act No. 9009, a town or municipality may be converted into a component city only if it meets two of three requirements: locally generated average annual income of P100 million for the last two consecutive years and contiguous territory of at least 100 square kilometers or a population of at least 150,000.

Alex Bellazon, former dean of the UP National College on Public Administration and Governance (UP-NCPAG), said the P100-million income requirement is a "must" for a town to meet the qualifications of a city under the Local Government Code.

"But only to the P100-million income required, a municipality must also meet the other requirement to become a city: a 150 square kilometer area or a population of at least 150,000.

San Fernando City, Pampanga Mayor Oscar Rodriguez, president of the League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP), said all the 16 towns allowed by the Supreme Court to become cities failed to meet the P100 million income requirement.

Saudi asked to pardon 600 Pinoys

By Jerry E. Esplanada

THE PHILIPPINE Embassy has asked the Saudi Arabia government to consider nearly 600 of 1,200 Filipinos serving jail terms in the Kingdom in King Abdullah's order for royal pardon, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said yesterday.

The embassy "has submitted for consideration, but the King's pardon, the names of almost 600 Filipino inmates in the hope that they may be granted," said Assistant Foreign Secretary J. Eduardo Malaya, the DFA spokesperson.

Last weekend, it was reported in the Saudi Gazette newspaper that King Abdullah would be issuing an order for royal pardon "on the occasion of his return from medical treatment abroad".

According to the Philippine embassy, Charge d'Affaires Eusebio Tugo, the royal pardon will cover only those serving jail terms for non-violent or petty crimes, not those on death row.

"The embassy has sent letters to the sponsor of the various Saudi religious and the ministry of interior with the list of detainees," he said.

He said he has no idea how many of the detainees recommended for pardon by the embassy will be included.

"Prison authorities have no review regarding cases individually," he said.

The embassy has requested Saudi authorities for the "speedy release" of those who will be covered by the pardon," Tugo said.

The Saudi Gazette newspaper reported that more than 10,000 of nearly 50,000 local and foreign inmates in various jails in the kingdom would benefit from the royal pardon.

The newspaper quoted Maj. Gen. Ali Bin Hussein Al-Harbi, prisons & center general, as having said the pardon "will not cover debt payments of prisoners related to criminal cases."

Al-Harbi was "confident that the number of those who will benefit from the King's gesture could exceed 10,000 prisoners. It could even be far more than this number," the newspaper added.

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The Daily Gospel

[illegible] (Thursday)
Psalter: Week 4
6th Week in Ordinary Time
Gen 3:1-8, 4:1-5, 6-7, 8-9
By the word of the Lord the heavens were made.

Let us pray. Mt 4:1-11

Jesus is God's eternal word. His words are his love and mirror what it has been. The Lord's words depend on his word, and creation obeys his will. The rain shines on everything and the work of the Lord is filled with his glory. Not even in his wildest moments did Satan get to full knowledge of all his marvelous works.

The Lord, Master of the universe, has ordained that all should stand him in his glory. He governs both the depth of the abyss and the human heart and knows their secrets. For the Most High has full knowledge and exercises the signs of the heavens. He knows the past and foretells the future and reveals the hidden traces of time. Not a single thought escapes him, no word is hidden from him.

He has ordered the marvelous works of his wisdom, from eternity and for ever. Nothing can be added, nothing can be taken away and he has no need of counsel. All his works are beautiful, even to the smallest spark of light.

All this Jesus said endures forever: all is useful and obedient to his will.

Although all is unique, and opposite the other, not anything he makes is in any way deficient.

One thing emphasizes the excellence of the other, who could ever weary of admiring his glory?

Gospel Mk 10:46-52

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth he began to call out and say, "Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!" Many people scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he shouted all the louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man saying, "Take heart, get up, he is calling you." He immediately threw aside his cloak, jumped up and went to Jesus.

Then Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said, "Master, let me see again!" And Jesus said to him, "Go your way, your faith has made you well." And immediately he could see, and he followed Jesus along the road.

Reflection:

The Chinese word for busy consists of two characters: the one on the left refers to the heart, while the other one on the right means dead. When we get so busy that we forget our heart, we "die" and become no different from the animals. Those two characters in Chinese are pronounced as "mang," which can also mean "blind." Again, blind sensation of two characters: the one on top is the same as the character on the right in busy, that is, dead, and the one below means eye. I may be healthy and well-off while serving with my eyes, but, because I am so busy, my heart is "blind" that my eyes are unable to see what is essential in life.

INQUIRER
OPINION

Giving the lie

EDITORIAL

THE DISTRIBUTION last Monday of the first checks to the thousands of listed Marcos human rights victims brought a lump to the throat—and caused not a few eyebrows. Can ₱1,000 possibly be equal to the unspeakable suffering that the victims and their kin went through during the dark days of the dictatorship? The answer, of course, is no. But then no amount of money can ever be satisfactory compensation. As many of the victims said themselves, they subdued the torture, the tortured disappearances, the sexual assault, the long days in prison or in the underground, because they were fighting for freedom. To put it in blunt terms: They did it for country, not money.

But in our day, in our system, money is a necessary symbol. We invest it with both social and personal meaning, if psychotic, for instance, represents not merely the cash value written on it; it symbolizes the worker's own hard work, it is a sign that the money was earned, it represents the purchases—the new appliances, the much-needed vacation, the last installment of a child's tuition fee—that the worker intends to use it for.

The checks that were distributed last Monday, part of a settlement involving one (and only one) set of Marcos cases resolved in a United States court, represent not merely the peso value of each listed victim's portion. They also symbolize the pain that the victims and their kin went through during the martial law years, as well as the unmistakable wait for legal clarity and judicial resolve they endured in the years after the institutions of democracy and the possibility of hope were restored. Above all, they serve as proof that, contrary to Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s revisionist version of history, his father the dictator was not in the process of transforming the Philippines into another Singapore. He had another island in mind: Alcatraz.

The stories that are joint to the make of the distribution of checks were truly heartwarming. As it happens, ₱43,200 (the peso equivalent of the individual settlement) can be stretched to meet certain basic needs: repairing the roof of a house, paying for tuition, buying necessary medicines. The portion each victim received seems small by present standards, but the sum each can be put to are real, tangible, necessary. The simple gratitude that many of the victims expressed upon receiving the money was a bracing reminder of the things that really matter.

But more than the cash value, each check, each act of compensation, stands as a living rebuttal to the offensive attempts of the Marcos family to deny personal responsibility for the horrors of the Marcos era. Each time a Marcos or his minion will be tempted to rewrite history, or argue the case for the dictator's burial in the national heroes' cemetery, or claim that life was better under Marcos' increasingly heavy hand, we can point to photocopies of the checks, or to the repaired roof, or to the child's diploma, and say: Here is proof of what the Marcos did.

We can only hope that other cases, involving greater sums of money will be resolved soon, and a compromise with the Philippine government's position as the only legal beneficiary of any settlement will be struck with the assistance of Congress. Perhaps a law can be passed appropriationg a certain proportion of any settlement money as compensation for human rights victims; perhaps the mandate to use any settlement money to fund agrarian reform can be modified.

And we should consider the checks distributed last Monday as a sign, too, that the national government should take the lead, and not merely play reluctant catch-up, in the issue of human rights compensation.

In fact, we should also encourage all claimants to include an additional legal demand: The Marcoses should be made to subsidize a memory fund, as it were. We need to remind ourselves of what really happened during the dark days of the dictatorship, and those who profited during the dictatorship should be made to fund this necessary and sustained act of reminding. A Martial Law Museum, a series of books on the atrocities of the era, a documentary of our very own Indonesian—the possibilities, like the checks themselves, are bracing.

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Freedom and its contingencies

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

ANG FILIPINO politician, or diplomat, or journalist, or academic who claims to have been given the legal declaration of the political situation in Libya today must indeed have extraordinary perceptual, analytical and predictive powers. He or she could make billions advising the United Nations, the United States, China (and all the global corporations that cozy up to it) and the world's economic today. Not even the US, with its unrivalled intelligence system, has been able to anticipate the complex events that are more readily unfolding in North Africa and the Persian Gulf.

For some reason, we Filipinos think we should have knowledgeable, well-told facts about harm than anybody else in canvassing our overseas workers from war-torn Libya. We think we could have prepared better for contingencies like civil unrest, military coups and revolutions in those countries to which we send our workers. I can only suppose that the problem for rebel-turning situations a distant from our long experiences with indifference and incompetent governments.

By this is a way. I think a lot to be said due to this ongoing crisis, the Philippine government's performance is on least as par with that of the many powerful countries whose nationals are caught under similar circumstances. It won't be easy to organize an estimated 30,000 Filipinos from Libya, doing so is, by any measure, a logistical nightmare. Many of them may not even want to come back to the Philippines. We can be sure they are hoping that, as in Tunisia and Egypt, Libya's exile will be short-lived and that Tunisia or Egypt. And Gaddafi has had longer presence to survive than any of the fellow countries in the region. Proving a military shadow, he has quickly crushed the rebellion in the east. Only two years, he has relied more on military and mercenaries.

Gaddafi will eventually go, but the end was

continued on page 2

Two

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

OPIE, 1602 governments bungled the evacuation of OFWs in Libya?

That's what some. "It's once reports have suggested, and that's what Jose Miguel Zubiri suggests. "Too little, too late," Zubiri said.

Inevitably.

The war in Libya of newly appointed foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario is personally to answer things should dispel that notion. It should suggest at least the kind of preparedness to getting the task. There are hints of it. It seems to what he can do. Has his presence at least should be a reassurance to the beleaguered Filipino nationals there that they are not being neglected. Most suppose is nothing to be able to assess like these. It is a mistake like talk.

What's there? Most of the OFWs in Libya, the reported OFWs out of harm's way? The complaint is that it has been haphazard and merry swapped with the way other countries have done for their nationals. But that's not accurate. Various have said that others have declared governments for the evacuees with which it came to their aid.

I don't know the other governments but how able to evacuate their nationals, how to... their claims remains unproven. I do know other countries have not sent their foreign secretaries to Libya. And I do know that other countries do not have to deal with a horde of nationals meeting secret.

But quite incidentally, not all OFWs in Libya are Filipinos or Tunisians' wages to leave their pile because they not all of them have been displaced, ravaged or "traumatized" to need some assistance keep intruding by the war. The very same reports have it, you'd think the easier value of Filipinos in Libya are enriching the iron gates of the rich or like the American and third World Governments friends in the end of the "American Plan begging to get out by hook or crook" as they would to wonder the thing through and get on with their lives. That was when they were there for an Filipino work, or because it must has nothing war at home, which is the war with wife.

It was easy in Libya (and Tunisia and Egypt)

continued on page 2

Middle East Unpreparedness Team

OUTLOOK

Rigoberto Tiglao

BY DECEMBER 2002, or a decade ago, when the US invasion of Iraq was imminent, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo appointed the Philippine Middle East Preparedness Committee (aided Executive Order No. 130). Its function was to prepare for the war, and was based on the appreciation of the fact that more than a million of our citizens were working in Middle East countries, which for various reasons (as in the case of the Iraq war) could suddenly require urgent space for them.

Macapaz the committee exercises powers, and in its main function is exactly nothing, what a normal new "EO shall, in relation with the critical developments in the Middle East, do: Assess the situation, formulate policies, develop tools for response, formulate policies, develop tools for response, formulate policies, develop tools for response

INQUIRER
Official Festival Representative

CANNES LIONS 2011

MARIA LUISA FRANCOLI PLAZA LEADS MEDIA LIONS JURY

KEITH ROSE TO CHAIR FILM CRAFT LIONS JURY

Maria Luisa Francoli Plaza

Keith Rose

London, 17 February 2011 - The organizers of the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity are pleased to announce the final two jury presidents for this year's event that will take place in June.

Maria Luisa Francoli Plaza, Global Chief Executive Officer of MPG since 2008, has been appointed Media Lions Jury President.

MPG, which was founded in Spain in 1978, is currently celebrating its 33rd year of leading new thinking in marketing communications. MPG is the biggest network within Havas Media with over 4,000 people in 100 offices worldwide.

Maria Luisa joined MPG in 1993 to head the newly created Corporate Development Department responsible for the geographical and business diversification of the company. In 1997, she was chosen to start the digital arm of the group, which led to the creation of Media Contacts - today a leading global interactive media network.

"Having served as judge in two previous Cannes Lions competitions, I am truly honoured to chair this year's Media Lions Jury. Cannes is the pulse of the media industry and I believe that seeing fresh, ground-breaking work from around the world pushes everyone forward while at the same time paving the way for the future of our industry. I'm looking forward to working hard, debating, collaborating and, most importantly, having fun with the 18 other highly talented jury" said Maria Luisa Francoli Plaza of her appointment.

The Film Craft category, launched in 2010 to award Lions to films based on the quality of the direction, copywriting, cinematography or editing as well as the skilful use of music, sound design or animation, will this year be chaired by Keith Rose, Director and Founding Partner of Velocity Films in South Africa.

An award winner at every major show, including several Gold Lions, Keith was selected by shots as one of their "100 Top Creative Minds of All Time" and accredited by Campaign magazine to be among the top five directors globally. He pushes for the essence of the idea, and uniquely seems to know in advance if it will work visually.

Commenting on his role, Keith Rose remarked, "Was it done in camera? Was it done in post? Who knows? Craft and techniques have developed to such an extent that it is impossible to decode unless there's a "making of" to view.

One thing I am certain of... if the technique used doesn't complement or reinforce the concept, it amounts to nothing. Technique for technique sake is futile. A weak story glossed over by a fancy execution is still a weak story. I very much look forward to judging this year's Film Craft Lions category at Cannes."

"It's a real pleasure to welcome Maria Luisa and Keith to Cannes this year. Animated by their peers and greatly skilled in their professions, I have no doubt that they will both effortlessly and successfully step up to their roles in Cannes and guide their juries to uphold excellence in the work being judged," commented Terry Savage, Cannes Lions Chairman.

Entries can now be submitted in the Media and Film Craft categories. For information, please go to www.canneslions.com

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- 'if' house for sale
- 'if' apartment for rent

CLASSIFIEDS

Ecumenical group hopeful over GPH-NDFP peace talks

LETTERS

THE PHILIPPINE Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP), the largest ecumenical formation of church leaders in the country, congratulates the negotiating panels of the Philippine government (GPH) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) for successfully concluding the first round of formal peace talks, with the help of the third party facilitators, the Royal Norwegian government.

We are elated that instead of bombs, bridges were built by the panels in order to proceed with the discussions of the substantive agenda that would address the roots of the armed conflict raging for more than four decades. Of foremost importance is the final Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) has been contested and can now presumably act on the numerous complaints of human rights violations in connection with the armed conflict filed with and received by the Joint Secretariat of the JMC.

The agreements of the panels for a general ceasefire for the talks is also a positive step that honors the aspirations of peace advocates all over the country. We are looking forward to the two parties commencing to negotiate guarantees on social and economic reforms, the next item in the substantive agenda. The PEPP believes that these reforms would address the roots of the armed conflict.

Thus we urge the Reciprocal Working Committees (RWCs) on Social and Economic Reforms to work on this with the interest interests and the people's welfare foremost in their minds. If these reforms are to come, the other substantive agenda can commence as planned.

For the formal negotiations to come to its fruition, we call on the people to support the peace process and to be vigilant against groups or acts that will undermine it. We must remember that the success of the formal negotiations is meant not just for the two negotiating parties. More importantly, it is meant for the people of the land.

For our part, we will continue to pray and encourage our church people to begin with anew. We will never to heighten public awareness of the peace process—starting with the joint statement that the GPH and NDFP released about the just concluded formal talks, along with the other pertinent documents—especially among the youth and other basic sectors who are the main stakeholders in the peace process.

Indeed, let us work peace and pursue it!

—ARCHBISHOP ANTONIO J. LEDESMA, S.J., DD and
QUAKER JOSE JOY ALEC JACKSONIII, CPW, cpwladyoverseas@HOT MIL EXCHCACHE E. ORCEZ, JR., MD, head of secretariat, Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP), pepp_churchleaders@hotmail.com

Ang kalusugan mo ay tanging yaman mo, kaya't...

Sumabay na sa Lakbay Buhay Kalusugan!

Isang masayang health caravan para sa mga nanay, tatay at buong pamilya. May mga eksibit, palaro, seminar at libreng konsultasyon para kina nanay at baby!

Bibiyahe na sa ***Marso 3-4 2011*** *sa* ***Capas, Tarlac.***

At maglalakbay pa sa mga probinsiyang ito:

LUZON
Pangasinan
Nueva Ecija

VISAYAS
Bohol
Negros Occidental

MINDANAO
South Cotabato
Compostela Valley
Zamboanga del Norte
Bukidnon
Maguindanao

Hatid sa inyo ng:

VICTORY LINER INC

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No $1,000 for other Marcos victims

From page A1

handed from the CHR office, where the checks were handed out.

Most of the claimants are divided into two groups—Claimants 1081 and Selda (Samahan ng mga Ex-Detainee Laban sa Detensyon at para sa Amnestiya). The two groups have been at odds over various issues concerning the class suit, including the distribution of the money.

1975: ACTIVISTS Veterans of the First Quarter Storm—from left, Ka Bartolomé of Kabataang Makabayan; Abet of Kadena; Ester Lamboloto of KM and Emily Garcia whose husband was detained and later disappeared without a trace in 1981—raise their fists and show their charter at the CHR office in Quezon City.

LONG WAIT Victims of human rights violations during the Marcos dictatorship wait for their turn to receive their $1,000 check at the Commission on Human Rights office in Quezon City on Wednesday. Thousands of people who were abused during the Marcos regime began receiving compensation on Monday in what they said was a symbolic victory in a long battle for justice.

'Eligible' claims

Raul Dominguez, one of the lawyers handling the case, explained that according to the US court order, only those who had filed claims in 1992 and 1995 would be getting the $1,000 settlement.

In its ruling on Jan. 13, 2011, the US District Court of Hawaii defined an "eligible" claim as that made "by a class member who submitted claim forms, as ordered by the court, in batch 1992 and 2008 as memorialized in the database maintained by lead counsel for the court."

The eligible claims numbered 7,326, the court said. Dominguez said the lawyers are required to follow that specific figure derived from nearly 10,000 claimants.

He explained that the victims had been inspected in the three claims' files, and that the second one would weed out any fraudulent claim made during the last wave of filing. "What we were doing was for their protection," he said.

Dominguez said that if there had been lapses and the claimants had missed the new deadline, they could have gotten in touch with him earlier so that he could have tried to do something to rectify the matter.

The claimants could have also contacted him to verify their claims, he said.

"But from 1995 up to 2011, what did they do? Maybe they did not believe [we would win]," Dominguez said.

He said that if there were errors in the 1992 and 1995 list were still marked off from the master list, he would look into the matters and the lawyers could file a motion in court asking for the inclusion of those names.

Being excluded from the master list does not mean that a person had not suffered during martial law, Dominguez said. "I only means they may not have followed the proper processes to be included among the eligible claimants, he said.

Arrested on birthday

Olivia said that as far as she knew, her husband had joined the claimants against the Marcoses. She even brought his release paper to show that her husband had been detained during martial law.

Wilmin's arrest was memorable, Olivia said, since it happened during his birthday. He was taken by authorities while working as a guard at La Fonda Inn, which was gripped by a strike in 1975—the first during martial law.

Olivia was looking forward to getting the check, not only because her husband had patiently waited for it, but because the line not been easy. She had intended to use it to pay off debts from interest, and start a "sari-sari" store, she said.

Cecille Bejer, a member of the Caloocan chapter of Selda, said he had property filed his claims but found out that he was not on the master list.

Bejer said he received a letter in December last year, advising him of the distribution of checks. He has lost sleep over not getting the money, which would have helped him and his family, he said.

He said he had wanted to get in touch with Dominguez and was willing to help him check the records of the claimants.

'Tortured' wives

Many enforced victims or their widows have gone to bed for help, Bejer said. Some, who had been jailed for four to seven years, lamented that not finding their names on the list of claimants was another form of "trauma," he recalled.

Others who had changed addresses in 1999 were not aware of the requirement to file a second claim.

Bejer sought transparency in determining who are the proper claimants.

Rubyn Olaga, 51, was also looking forward to the check, which he thought he would get after receiving a letter from Dominguez in December last year.

Since he has no steady job, the money could have helped him and his eight children a lot, Olaga said.

Three enrollees from the master list were asked to leave their names and contact numbers with the CHR. They were told that their cases would be looked into.

Dominguez said the lawyers had not made the names of the claimants public for security reasons.

There are concerns that the claimants might be robbed or subjected to extortion, he said.

No cap in oil price as world crude surges amid political chaos

From page A1

World crude prices surged on Tuesday with Brent crude for April delivery breaching $115 a barrel as the potential for more oil shipment disruptions spread across the Middle East and North Africa.

Gasoline is now retailed at more than P52 a liter and diesel at more than P43 a liter in Metro Manila.

Sen. Ralph Recto on Tuesday said oil firms in the country were exploiting the unrest in the Arab world to raise petrol prices way beyond their purchasing cost 35 days ago.

Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri yesterday said he would like to see working to impose hefty (but not windfall) profits of oil firms. "They lack political will. I do not know why they are afraid," he told reporters, referring to energy officials.

Malacañang said the recent oil price increases were "justified" as they were "within the contemplations" of the DOE.

6 price hikes

Since the beginning of the year, oil firms have raised prices of gasoline and diesel on users to a total of P6.20 per liter and P4.50 per liter, respectively.

The oil companies implemented only one price cut of 75 centavos a liter for gasoline, and 25 centavos a liter for diesel, data from the DOE showed.

Highest since August 2008

Brent oil held steadily above $115 a barrel on Wednesday after settling at a near 2-1/2-year high as tension in Libya unsettled up, spurring fears other producers in the Middle East and North Africa would face similar events.

Brent crude for April delivery rose 2 cents to $115.46 a barrel by 0:07 am GMT. The contract settled up $1.62 or 1.24 percent at $115.44 a barrel on Tuesday, its highest close since August 2008.

In Asian trade, US crude for April delivery rose 3.6 cents to $99.86 a barrel after hitting an intraday high of $100.65 due to a script for $100 to $150 crude investors could see unseen while gasoline stockpiles were down sharply.

"If the unrest continues to spread, Middle East tensions may reach a point where a war could start and that could ignite an incredible rally (in oil prices)," said Hyoma Tarumi, a commodities sales manager at Sovereign Japan.

Moderate greed

Ernesto Abe Ebinueng Maya Teo (EMET) on urging President Aquino to "step into the picking of oil with the goal of reducing prices and moderating the greed of the oil companies."

EMET said that oil firms in the country were using the political turmoil in North Africa and the Middle East to justify the huge increase in the prices of their products.

"We demand that the government junk the Oil Deregulation Law and control oil prices, as well as remove the value-added tax on oil products," EMET said in a statement.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Abigail Valte said the recent fuel price hikes were just half of the increases that should have been implemented by oil firms.

Valte said Malacañang was open to meeting with the Consumer Price Watch of businessman Raul Concepcion that reportedly had a different computation of what the oil price increases should be.

Mandaluyong Rep. Neptali Gonzales on Tuesday night that if the government were to reestablish an OPEC it should be prepared to shoulder potential losses should global prices continue to go up.

He also noted that the country might not have the necessary infrastructure to store huge volumes of fuel given the varying storage capacities of the local oil companies.

The country's daily fuel consumption was placed at an average of 200,000 barrels.

DOE circular

Amid the turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa, the DOE has issued a circular requiring all oil firms to maintain a minimum inventory.

The circular, published yesterday, said that with the exception of refiners, oil firms and bulk suppliers shall maintain a minimum inventory equivalent to 15 days supply consisting of crude oil and refined petroleum products. Currently, there are only two refiners in the Philippines—Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp.

A circular mandating the inventory requirement was first issued in January 2005, but was lifted after two months when crude prices dropped until the country's fuel inventory rose.

Alexander said the "current political and civil unrest in several countries in the Mideast region necessitates the reinstatement of the minimum inventory requirement."

Libyan oil supply cut

In Libya, major oil operations in the eastern part of the country remained under the control of rebel forces. While foreign operators withdrew most of their foreign workers, local Libyan employees ran still produce some crude.

Oil experts say at least one million of Libya's 1.6 million barrels a day of production have been shut down.

Little if any oil can be shipped out of Libya because most ports were closed. Meanwhile, storage tanks were filling up rapidly.

Oil traders said one major oil company cargo ship was supposed to berth this week, but no one was at the port to deliver an oil shipment, and shipping companies were reluctant to send ships into the Libyan ports.

Most fields in Libya are operated by a consortium of National Oil Co., which owns 50 percent of the fields, and international consortiums, which share the other half.

Austrian Gulf Oil Co., the largest subsidiary of Libya National Oil Corp., claims it had broken off from its mother company. It said it would freeze its contracts but would deliver the funds to the opposition, not to Tripoli.

Unrest in Oman

With Libya's oil exports almost entirely halted for the last several days, renewed unrest in Oman, Iran and Iraq rattled oil traders.

An interruption of shipments from any of those countries would further tighten oil supplies, even as Saudi Arabia has rushed to fill the turnover of Libyan supplies by pumping more oil from its fields.

In the latest sign that the political contagion was spreading, demonstrations in Oman on Tuesday tried to block a major road leading to the industrial port town of Sohar.

Protests in recent days have set fire to coal-burning power stations and two government offices buildings in the normally stable Persian Gulf country, which is ruled by a family dynasty and is the largest non-Opec oil producer in the Middle East.

"To have protests in Oman, which had previously been seen as a sleepy gulf kingdom, heightens concerns that nowhere is immune from the contagion effect," said Jeffrey L. Craft, a director and senior geopolitical analyst at Barclays Capital.

Oman produces 860,000 barrels of oil daily, about 1 percent of world supplies, and its production has been rising in recent years with investments from Royal Dutch Shell, BP, Repsol and other international companies.

Strategic route

Oman straddles the mouth of the Persian Gulf, a strategic route through which 40 percent of the world's oil tanker traffic crosses.

On the other side of the strait lies Iran, whose security forces were reported to have used tear gas to disperse protesters in Tehran on Tuesday, Iran, with approximately 10 percent of the world's oil reserves, exports about 2.7 million barrels a day. *Reports from Amy R. Remo, Christine D. Avendaño and Christian V. Esguerra, New York Times News Service and Reuters*

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MAXI Atletika
Natural Soap with Herbs

PSA awards night to honor late athletes, colleagues

By Cristiel F. Tupas

A LEGENDARY golfer, an award-winning athletics coach and a luminary in world chess will be among the personalities who will be remembered for their contributions during the Philippine Sportswriters Association-Coca Cola Annual Awards Night on Saturday at the Manila Hotel.

Late greats Celestino Topio—a athletics veteran of the Philippine Open—coach and field mentor Francisco "Sitting" De Vega and former Hilo prodigy Dennis Florencio Campomanes are among the 11 individuals who will be given a short yet meaningful tribute during this year's gala event.

The late colleagues of the PSA sports scribes Dita Marie Villoria, Willie Caballes, and Emmanuel Perez de Tagle, together with photographer John Pinlim, basketball player Bernardo "Bertie" Ilustre, Dona Ana, and Shirley "Rockdale" de los Santos-and-one are among the Champion Jose Emilio Bernard "Bombit" Ramirez will also be remembered by the sportswriters' group.

Campomanes will also be honored in the PSA Hall of Fame together with pool icon Efren Reyes Jr.

Bestowing this ceremony is champion boxer Manny Pacquiao, a PSA Hall of Fame thoroughbred, who was also honored as Athlete of the Decade last year.

Asian Games gold medalists Roy Mendoza, Hilary Flores and Renato Ocvello and billiards Hall of Famer Francisco "Django" Bustamante will share the limelight in the year's first when they will be honored as Athletes of the Year.

Also on the honor roll are the highly popular Philippine men's football team, which will receive the PSA Presidential Achievement Award and Asian team manager Dan Palami, who will be honored as Executive of the Year.

The other medalists in the last hand and the world champion men's pasmear team lead the 14 personalities to be given a taste award, while the lieutenant Boxing Association of the Philippines (APaga) is the National Sports Association of the Year.

The awards gala is presented by San Miguel Corp., the Philippine Sports Commission, Samsung, Accel, Nihon Ohtsuki Insurance International, Harbour Center, the Magsaysay Philippine Basketball Association and International Container Terminal Services Inc.

Expected to attend the time are Sen. Chiz Escudero, Senate PLDT chair Manny V. Pangilinan, Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, IOC representative to the Philippines Frank Elizalde, and PSC chair Richie Garcia.

PSA Hall of Fame Class

Athletes of the Year—Natalia Carmel Buitrago, Denis Dorio, Ely Garcia, Glory Sara

PSA Presidential Achievement Award—Philippine men's football team

Executive of the Year—Dan Palami

Major Awardees—Athletics' men's javelin toss champion and basketball men's national team coach Bienvenido "Benny" Lopez, Major Leagues Asia-Atlantic Sports Federation (MLASAF) president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, IOC representative to the Philippines Frank Elizalde, and PSC chair Richie Garcia.

CAMPOMANES

Dick, Jaime Yap, PC Garcia, Ito Trias, Jesse Juan Mano Ramos.

National Sports Association of the Year—Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (ABAP)

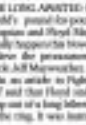
Hall of Fame—Pool: Efren "Bata" Reyes; Thoroughbred horseracing: Carlos Agapito "Boy" Yap

Boxing: Gabriel "Flash" Elorde, Antonio Margarito, Dodie Boy Penalosa, Gerry Peñalosa, Alex Ariza, Rolando Navarrete, Leo Rapon, Ben Villaflor, Luisito Espinosa, Rodel Mayol, Bernabe Concepcion, Pancho Bautista, Ceferino Garcia, Melchor Cob Chua, Eleuterio Zulueta

Will Floyd finally face Manny?

THE LONG AWAITED fight between the world's pound-for-pound king Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather Jr may finally happen this November if we are to believe the pronouncements of Floyd's uncle Jeff Mayweather.

In an article in Fightbuzz.com, uncle Jeff said that Floyd suddenly decided to dump out of a long hibernation to get back in the ring. It was insinuated that Floyd, whose last fight was against Sugar Shane Mosley in more or less one year ago, got restless with all the adulation and love worship Pacquiao is enjoying in the United States, to paraphrase the entreaties he got from President



IN HUDDLE

Beth Cielo

Barack Obama.

President Obama, who Floyd openly supported during the presidential campaign and joined him in a series of public appearances, praised Manny and also declared an audience at the White House during their last trip to the United States.

In other words, while Floyd was in semi retirement, Manny was getting all the attention as the American fighter slowly faded out of people's consciousness.

* * *

A world-class trainer, uncle Jeff said **another fight has been scheduled for Floyd Jr.** this summer, which will serve **as a tune-up bout for the November** event.

The fight, which is also envisioned by the Mayweathers to reverberate the Pacquiao-Obama meeting at the White House, is set in South Africa this July and will coincide with the 92nd birthday celebration of former president and civil rights leader Nelson Mandela, whose daughter Zindzi has been personally negotiating with Floyd Jr. No opponent has been picked for Mayweather yet.

Nelson Mandela is himself a former boxer and remains an avid boxing fan to this day.

Meanwhile, a rumor from the Pacquiao camp facebook that negotiations have been ongoing quietly between Pacquiao's quarters and Golden Boy Promotions.

Reports have it that the two camps have not been down. Here's hoping Floyd Jr. doesn't change his mind and pull out of the negotiations at the last minute—if it gets to that point.

* * *

Negotiations for the purchase of Bambo Bull's PBA franchise supposedly were confidential, pending the decision of the PBA board to allow the sale.

But in the PBA, it's hard to keep a secret. Media knew about the proposed sale as soon as supporting documents were distributed.

The interested party is Dennis Uy of Phoenix Petroleum, a young businessman from Davao City who is also into mining, shipping and other interests, including sports management, among others.

I don't know how true that is, but Dennis is linked to have the Globe team since his winner-stinch gold in a Mt. Diwalwal race.

* * *

Dennis is certainly no stranger to the PBA. He has been patronizing PBA games in Davao, even during the days when Bobo matches were held in an old, rundown gymnasium.

I remember there was a time when a game had to be postponed or cancelled on account of a tunnel and slippery floor.

A new court has now been built and Dennis has now been elevated to prominent games presidents, with Phoenix Petroleum often tapped as the sponsor of the tournaments.

A PBA source said Dennis has been very supportive of the 56-year-old league. Fears what I gathered, about half of the bubbles have responded to the proposal as of today.

I also heard that the terms and conditions of the sale will not be announced until the required number of ballots to have approved to accept Phoenix into the league.

'Superman' makes Knicks look like mere mortals

MAGIC center Dwight Howard (middle) shoots against the defense of the Knicks' Shawne Williams (left) and Amar'e Stoudemire. AP

ORLANDO, FLORIDA—Orlando brought the New York Knicks back to Earth with a bump on Tuesday with Dwight Howard grabbing 30 points in the Magic's 130-119 victory in the NBA.

Howard, dubbed "Superman" by fans, also logged 16 rebounds and five blocks as the Magic overcame an 11-point deficit in the third quarter to deny the now-lost Knicks their second successive win over an Eastern Conference power.

While Howard opened with 17 points in the first quarter, it was teammate Jameer Nelson who took the spotlight in the closing stages, converting 16 of his 26 points in the fourth.

"[Howard] is the reason why we are who we are. We play inside out, and we have guys who can make plays for each other," Nelson told reporters. "[The Knicks] have three of the better players in the league. We're a pretty good offensive team as well."

The Knicks (30-20) host the Miami Heat on Sunday in their first major test since acquiring All-Star forward Carmelo Anthony and point guard Chauncey Billups in last week's blockbuster trade.

While New York got 30 points from Billups and Amar'e Stoudemire, and 20 from Anthony, Orlando's 28-6 run spanning the third and fourth quarters put the home team in control.

Down the stretch, Nelson nailed 11 consecutive Orlando points to give his team a 126-99 advantage with 4:26 to go.

Ryan Anderson made four three-pointers and scored 16 points to help the Magic overcome the loss of forward Hedo Turkoglu, who was ejected with a second technical in the second quarter after he said something to a referee from the bench.

Reuters

LINESCORES AND NBA STATS

Orlando 130, New York 119; Utah 102, Washington 91; Toronto 98, New Orleans 86; Memphis 110, San Antonio 82; Detroit 94, Cleveland 91; Houston 107, Golden State 97; Portland 103, Minnesota 91; Phoenix 107, Sacramento 97; Denver 114, Los Angeles Clippers 97; Los Angeles Lakers 111, Milwaukee 92

Azkals not stymied by cold Ulan Bator

By Cazzel P. Tupaz

FLORAO STROOD: Phil Younghusband sustained convinced that the adjacent wintery conditions in Ulan Bator will not pose much of a problem for the Philippines in the second leg of its AFC Challenge Cup qualifying duel with Mongolia.

The 23-year-old striker believes he has played in even worse conditions while suiting action for Chelsea in the Reserve League in England.

"I just think as long as you're running around the pitch that much be a problem," Younghusband, who scored one goal in the 2-0 win over Mongolia in the first leg in Rizal City said in the locution.

"On that day I would rather be playing on the pitch than just watching the game [from] the stands."

Younghusband said he was disappointed at the way Mongolia played the first leg, where the entire squad is just as backboned defend.

"I expected them to be better," said Younghusband. "At least they should have shown some composure on the ball."

Younghusband added: "I don't think I can be called complacent that view without Neil Etheridge and Hoib Jones we can get a result in Mongolia."

The second of 11 international goals for the Philippines between the duo came away with at least a 4-4 draw victory in Mongolia and move into the group qualifying in Yangon, Myanmar.

Temperatures in Ulan Bator were recorded at -13 degrees Celsius yesterday. The second match on March 15 is set at 3 p.m., which is already considered the hottest time of the day in the Mongolian capital.

The National Stadium in Ulan Bator has an artificial pitch and the Azkals have been familiarizing themselves with the surface by training at the International School Manila.

The Azkals underwent an acclimatization training session yesterday, walking through Intramuros, Manila's historical district, one of the attractions in a theme park in Manila, before practicing at the UST.

"We want the players to get a feel of the weather, see if they can really handle it," said Azkals manager Dan Palami.

Palami, who will receive the Inventor of the Year award for the second time in his career with the Azkals during the Philippine Sportswriters Association Coco Cola Awards Night on Saturday, expressed confidence in the team making an impact beyond the Mongolian match.

YOUNGHUSBAND

Abaño opens up four-shot Mindanao Amateur lead

DANNY ABAÑO shot a flawless opening round of five-under par 67 Tuesday to grab a four-stroke lead in the PGAP's Mindanao Regional amateur championship presented by Hocolac Home and SDC Lands.

The 22-year-old star of new PGL Interclub champion Del Monte gunned down five birdies in an impressive display of all-around brilliance at the heavily wooded Del Monte layout.

MA Arbois, who learned the game at Del Monte but now plays for Camp Johnny, fired a 71 with local lads Raymund Jumola and Leonard Lobanco deadlocked for third with 72s.

Paul Echarez and Tanner Boy Galan, former caddies at Apo Golf in Davao, carded 73s along with crowd-favorite Jay Bee Ilustre.

Abaño, who is set to tee off in the star-studded Ivy Calloway and Odyssey Golf and the Del Monte golf club.

The top three finishes in this tournament will take all-expense paid trips to Manila for the Philippine Amateur championship slated April 12 to 15 at The Riviera in Silang, Cavite.

Abaño shot three of his birdies in the front nine before closing birdie-par-birdie. He had rounds of 73 at Del Monte and 71 at Pueblo de Oro last week during the tuneups.

Clyde Mondilla, the 17-year-old who will defend his Philippine amateur title at the Riviera, withdrew to play all-star practice rounds for the barangay-favored Montecillo Cup next week at Malaysia.

The 54-hole ladies' event of the tournament level will yesterday featuring some mainstays of the ICTSI stables led by Danielle Uy and Sarah Abalos.

Chiu lone finisher in PHA Allen race

LEIH CHIU came good the lone finisher in the race except fourth leg of the Philippine Hunting Dogs Association (PHDA) 2011 South Race held in Allen, Samar, over the weekend.

Chiu's entry negotiated the six distances of 400 kilometers from Allen to Manila with an average speed of 39.6 400 kilometer minute.

"It is a real muddy race. It was running hard from Allen to Laguna and only one bird made it," said PHA president Jaime Uno.

PHA starting time Sabon Chiu and a total of 502 birds (young and old) were released at 8:57 a.m. Sunday. The BDO leg of the seven-leg series is slated in Catbalogan, Samar, on March 7.

Class 1—(20—for The Same (3), Jude Gogo (3), Jhonie Jose (3)

Class 2—(Pts—8/24/11)—Mt. Carmel (8), Rajeem (3), Jhonbabe (4), Emanuel (3), Ye Tan (2).

Class 3—(24/36)—Lee Lee (2), Jake Mitch (6), Mr Mitch (3), Pilotta to Manila (7)

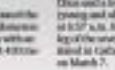
Class 4—(36—Kamson (1), Show Up Kevin (2), Kalayaan (2).

Class 5—(49/60/65)—Napoleon (2), Handy Joe (1), Jack Mandy (6), Blue Fake (6), Mark Mitch (3)

Class 6—(Pts—8/24/11)—Pinoy's Pride (4), Pango (3), Bonito Mitch (1), Al Gold, Uncle Pinoy (2)

Class 7—(Pts—8/24/11)—Mr. Mr. Ma Yan (6), Kamsson's Pride (1), Uncle Mitch (1), Pioneer 69 (1), Arnel (4), 4 (2)

Class 8—(Open 8/24/11)—Pretty Mitch (3), Pioneer Hunter (1), Mr. Ma Dodge (8), Lt. Mr. (8), Spartan Storm (70), Sophomore (8)



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P. Princesa hosts big motocross event anew

FOR THE eighth straight year, Puerto Princesa will host the opening round of The Motocross Masters of Asia, the Philippine leg of the FIM Asian Motocross Supercross Championship.

Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn and FIM Asia President Khaleq Gachengkeng signed the agreement that will bring back the annual motorsports to the Strolling Palawan capital on March 26 and 27.

Leading the field is Japan's famous "Tamakuro" Suzuki, the 2010 champion in the contentious Asian MX2 (Over 125) category who is bidding to become the series' first-ever back-to-back champion.

Crossing Japan are Mongolia's Chuluunbold Gankhuyag, the Philippines' reigning national motocross rider of the year Kenneth Sun Andres and Iran's Arsinnova Saberifar.

The Asian Junior 85cc event features Filipinos Mark Reggie Flores and Gabriel Macasa. The overall champion in the MX2 category will bag the Mayor Edward Hagedorn Cup.

The 2011 FIM Asian Motocross Supercross Championship is being organized by Dunlop and sponsored by Oakley. For details, visit www.fimasia.org and www.motocross.org.ph or call or text 0917-8670745.

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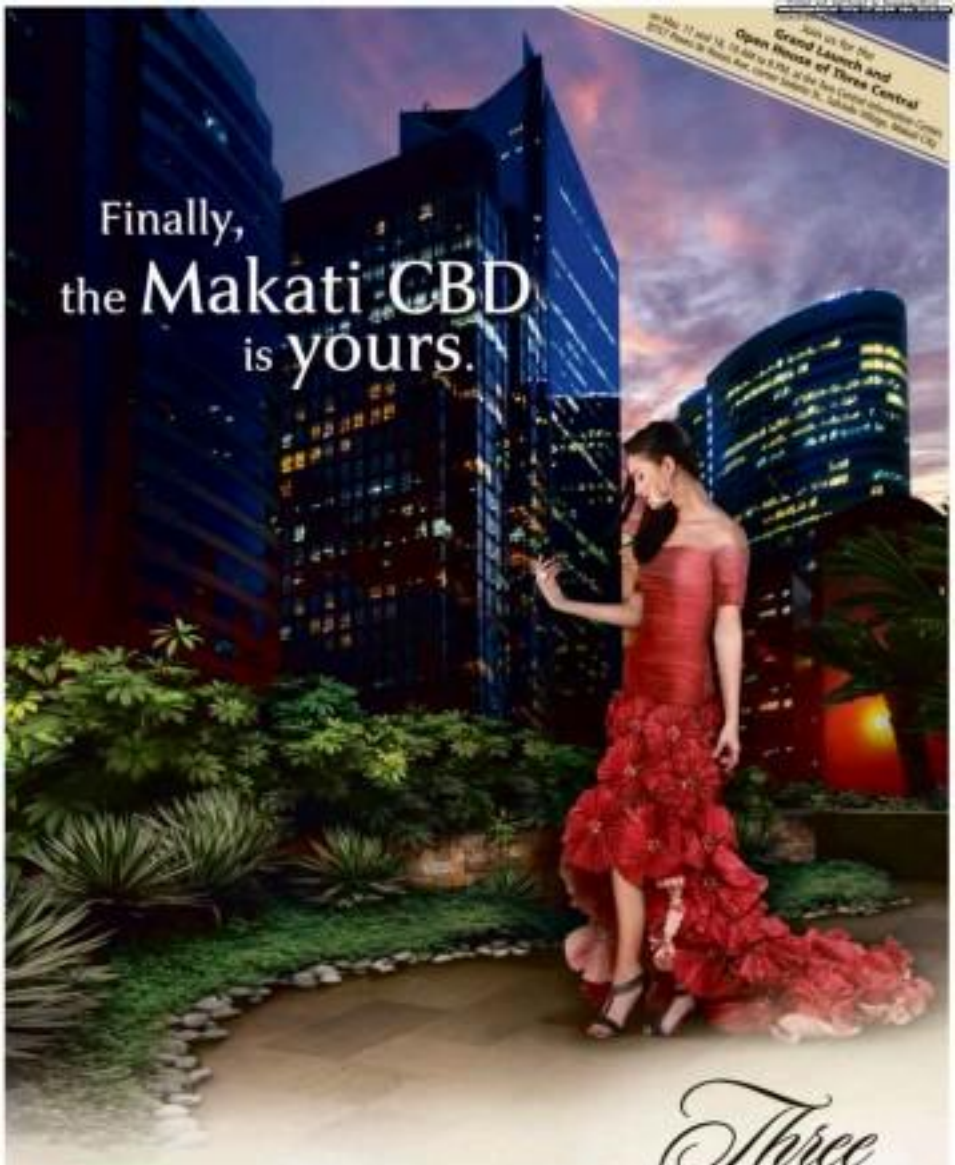

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DID YOU KNOW

THE NATIONAL Capital Region posted the highest number of index crimes (murder, homicide, physical injury, rape, robbery, theft and car theft) among the country's regions in 2010. During this period, there were 20,021 crimes against persons and property.
JOAQUIN Dundee Inquirer Research

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8 gov't men, cop sanctioned for drugs

CAN YOU tell which is the real thing? Here's a clue: The authentic Ateneo de Manila University diploma is written in Latin. porter i lim

By Nico Calleja

EIGHT employees of the Mandaluyong City government and a policeman have been sanctioned after they tested positive for illegal drugs during a mandatory drug test conducted last year, Mayor Benhur Abalos said yesterday.

According to Abalos, three of those who tested positive for drug use were contractual employees who were immediately let go after their job contracts with the city government expired.

Five more, he added, are facing termination.

"Once I get hold of the names, I notified our personnel department and our lawyer to institute the proper proceedings for their dismissal from service," Abalos said.

As for same time, the mayor ordered Senior Supt. Armando Bolaño, Mandaluyong police chief, to file an administrative complaint against the policeman who was found positive for drugs.

Abalos, however, refused to identify the eight government employees and policeman, saying the city government must first comply with certain procedures before it could do so.

In November, 1,042 employees of the city government, members of the police force, jail officers and even prosecutors and every employees underwent drug testing as part of the city's campaign against illegal drugs.

The move was also in compliance with a directive from the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

As stated in Memorandum Circular No. 13 of the CSC, "any official or employee found positive for use of dangerous drugs shall be subjected to disciplinary/administrative proceedings with a penalty of dismissal from the service at first offense." Upon dismissal, the employees will automatically be denied their salary and benefits.

The test results were forwarded to the city government only recently.

"I'm winning our employees. It doesn't mean that because they tested negative, I will take my eyes off them. This mandatory drug test will be done yearly because we want to cleanse our ranks," Abalos said.

Post-grad a busy time at Recto U

By Jayson T. Gozo

FOR LESS than P1,000, one can pass yourself off as a college graduate. That's the promise offered by "Sorsi University," the streets of Claro M. Recto Avenue in Sta. Cruz, Manila, which has become notorious for faking official documents, including school records.

To find out just how skilled these forgers were, I decided to have my own diploma from Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) faked. I chose a mall manned by flustered, savage-looking young men. The transaction was fast; he didn't even ask why I wanted an MMG 2007 diploma and a transcript of records to match. He simply assured me: "We'll take care of it. We have originals to copy from for all schools, for any year." The diploma went for P600. On package with the transcript costs P900.

After I paid the deposit, Raymund went off to have the documents

POST-GRAD, A20

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Post-grad a busy time at Recto U

From page A-9

meals. But he returned shortly after to report that they were having problems with the transcript. "Yes, these a hard copies, Melvin," he said, telling it like that. They were not researching them online.

I agreed to release the post-day but I had yet to know the hours when Raymond invited me and asked if they could just change my source to Mine-Commemoratives (the course offered in AMBU is Communication).

As if that made sense enough, upon pickup, the school name on the diploma read: "MEMO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY." I asked for a do-over. After an hour Raymond came back with the document.

The diploma had a gold seal stamped with AMBU's logo, complete with forged signatures, but it looked nothing like the original. To say the real diploma is not in Latin. The signatures were also wrong. They invented a dean. He universally president was from a different branch and had been dead since 2000 while the registrar who signed the graduation program forgot. "We don't find it in our jurisdiction (to do so)," the said. Computers don't use the 'do' emphasis either. Bowing insisted to me that the employers or must an applicant outright. Pinoys can be relentless. Besides, many graduates get to love? "It does mean fakers them good. A missed opportunity is difficult to repair," the AMBU employee warned.

Apparently in Recto University the barrer leads the like Courtney to the forgot' claims, they wouldn't get it right unless you were to partake. Bow with the concert details.

Even so, "the undergraduate diplomas at Recto are a recurrent problem, the peak season of which is after graduation," Memo-Jo-Cito Espiritu said.

For the most part, Recto University thrives because sometimes, false documents can pass off for the real ones despite their quality, because of a faulty verification process. Because everyone's management head Jose Gil Puyat, who has worked in the HR industry for 15 years, said that employers don't really know what school records from the different universities look like.

Diploma fakers said their signatures can be changed with liquid erasers of printers or public documents, and 'Jo Is Gito. These are buildable offenses but they can also land you from eight months in six years in jail, depending on the surrounding circumstances of the crime.

The AMBU employee said that due to the doesn't "like embarrassment" I'll do what I can. Computers don't use the 'do' emphasis either. Bowing insisted to me that the employers or must an applicant outright. Pinoys can be relentless. Besides, many graduates get to love? "It does mean fakers them good. A missed opportunity is difficult to repair," the AMBU employee warned.

METROBRIEFS

4 vehicles hit elderly woman crossing street

An OLD WOMAN trying to cross a busy road in Quezon City was killed yesterday after four vehicles ran her down one after the other, PNP Traffic Management Group said Wednesday, who had yet to be identified, was crossing Kamias Road at around 2:15 a.m. when a van ran over her. A fifth vehicle, a car, also hit the victim but she was run over by three other vehicles, according to eyewitnesses who were at the scene. The police said none of the drivers stopped to help the victim who was killed by the time she was rushed to the hospital. — Jerry E. Esplanada

Metro cops now armed with Tasers

MAKATI (via) — Carlos Zeling of the Makati police briefed in gun control city after a device were being introduced among the ranks of the Metro Manila police was tested on him. "I could not move because the city was fast forward very fast," said Zeling after he recovered from the shock of being hit by a Taser round. At least 30 police officers from the Philippine Marines and the public safety institute of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) completed their training yesterday on the use of Taser weapons that can shoot barbs into the victim's skin to "paralyze." "We need to use this kind of weapon to avert casualties," said NCRPO Director Eleazar Bartolome who attended the demonstration at Camp Bagong Diwa. "This is not designed to kill." — Mike Frialde

MAHABA-HABANG INUMAN WITH SAN MIG LIGHT'S NEWEST "IT" GIRL- SAM PINTO

San Mig Light Lalee Jin is refreshing, appealing to be season TV commercial, this time bringing the scene to another favorite hang out where light moments abound: the cold beverage!

And who better than the lead in a refreshing light - to other than the year's fairest, Hang out San Pinto, who certainly fits the role of embracing the number one low-calorie beer in the country.

Each contestant that joining a date from San Miguel is something interested.

"I had an instant link to a classic comic duo. The San Mig Light contest is definitely a breakthrough in my young career," shares the 23 year old actress-model.

For its part, the San Mig Light team thinks that Sam fits the brand's attributes to a T.

"Sam is more than what showbiz has cast her - positive persona is something that makes you eager for more of her presence. Sam is carefree, pleasant and confident, engaging presence, just like San Mig Light," shares the brand representative.

In the commercial, shot in a cool bar, Sam takes that compliments her "relaxing, going San Mig Light," bare swimsuit with her trademark moves, poise and confidence, as if the pool is her playground and the guests her best friends.

"I love swimming and outdoor activities. I also play badminton," when asked how she keeps herself in shape despite her long hours on shoot's eaten.

She adds whatever she wants but in small quantities. Frequent small feasting works for me," Sam adds.

Though her career is on a roll with several projects lined up for this year, Sam swears a this one finds time to chill out with her friends. Exchanging conversations over buckets of San Mig Light is almost a self-compliment.

"I go for San Mig Light because it is low-calorie and magpapa-sexy ako. So there's no worry even if I feed around a bucket when I unwind with my friends," she explains.

Laws against littering pushed

By Mike Frialde

METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Francis Tolentino yesterday asked Metro mayors to enact antilittering ordinances in their areas before the start of the rainy season in early June.

"Mimo na lang government units implement antilittering campaigns simultaneously and, as one, we will send a strong signal to the public that we mean business," he said in a statement.

However, local governments which already have antilittering laws should enforce them "without letup" to prevent flooding in the streets, he added.

According to Tolentino, the MMDA has also been doing its share. During the removed enforcement of the antilittering ordinance passed by the Metro Manila Council covering the region, MMDA personnel arrested 23,000 people for disposing of their trash illegally.

Under the ordinance which is being enforced in major Barangays under the jurisdiction of the agency, violators will be fined between P500 and P1,000 in addition to rendering community service.

Court of Appeals favors drug offenders

THE COURT of Appeals has been on an acquittal spree for several months now.

Curiously, but not surprisingly, the beneficiaries of the appellate court's acquittal binge are people convicted by the lower courts of drug pushing and trafficking.

In short, these rules favor money to buy their freedom.

ON TARGET

Ramon Bato

My aside to the Court of Appeals can never share 300 drug convicts in the National Penitentiary have been released after they were acquitted by the court.

One wonders how much money changed hands...even as you...think of millions?

With that much money some Court of Appeals justices will be retiring in minimum comfort.

If there are many Court of Appeals justices on the take, you can imagine how many municipal and regional trial court judges are corrupt.

If the judiciary's "second layer" wreak of the crop—the Supreme Court magistrates being in the first layer...can be bought, what do you expect from the lower magistrates?

The assumption that justice in the country favors the rich is true.

If one can afford the biggest buy a judge or justices handing his case if he doesn't have the money?

What is the use of an aspiring lawyer topping the bar examinations if court trials are not based on the merits, but depending on how much money is on the table?

It's surprising there are still so many law graduates taking the bar when knowledge of the law is not so important as knowing how to connect with the judges or justices handling one's criminal or civil case.

Government investigations, be assured, if you go beyond the bounds of your subject's patience, you might end up in the Great Beyond.

A government tax collector was shot dead recently in a town outside Metro Manila because he was allegedly demanding more than his quota.

The same thing happened months ago to a corrupt land registration officer in a province adjoining Metro Manila.

Their replacements are now more accommodating.

The wife and daughter of a national official are always buying expensive jewelry from a well-known shop in Makati City, according to a source.

Mother and daughter are also on a buying spree of real estate property.

The wife is a business person/ official...the daughter is also a government employee.

It really pays to work in government.

The driver of a silver Toyota Altis sedan, with plate number RET 341, recently went against the flow of traffic on Roxas Boulevard in Malate and nearly hit a motorcycle.

He was escorted by a motorcycle cop and a police patrol car.

CIO records show the owner of the vehicle is Obdulio Calumnador of 1 Emerald St., Goldhill Homes, Bagbag, Novaliches, Quezon City.

Boss, what you said in his inaugural speech at Rizal Park that relatives using sirens to get ahead in traffic would be things of the past.

"Habang nasa ating, walang sasantuhin ito. Uso noon sirot, ito sirot, counter-flow," said the new President.

Who is this Obdulio Calumnador that the cop escorted? Who's the owner?

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Lot 2: Supply of Fax Machines

Description	Quantity
Fax Machine	1
Thermal Fax Paper	1

Bidding Documents may be purchased with a non-refundable fee of ₱1,000.00 at the Office of the Corporate Secretary, 2nd Floor, Main Building.

Bids must be delivered on or before March 4, 2011, 10:00 a.m. at the Office of the Corporate Secretary, 2nd Floor, Main Building. All bids must be accompanied with a bid security in the form of a manager's check or cashier's check issued by a commercial bank, or a surety bond callable on demand, in favor of the Bank, equivalent to two percent (2%) of the total bid price.

The Bank reserves the right to reject any and all bids, to waive any defect therein, and to accept such bid as may be considered most advantageous to the Bank.

Approved by:

[illegible]
Chairman

[illegible]
Corporate Secretary

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
Region IV-A (CALABARZON)
SCHOOLS DIVISION OFFICE, RIZAL PROVINCE
City of Tanauang
(Mabini Extension) www.deped.com

INVITATION TO BID

FOR SOLE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF SCHOOL FURNITURE

The Department of Education, Region IV-A (CALABARZON) intends to apply the sum of [illegible] being the ABC to payments under the contract for the Supply and Delivery of School Furniture for the Schools Division Office, Rizal Province. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at the opening.

The Department of Education, Region IV-A (CALABARZON) now invites bids for the Supply and Delivery of School Furniture for the Schools Division Office, Rizal Province. Delivery of the Goods is required by [illegible] days. Bidders should have completed, within [illegible] years from the date of submission and receipt of bids, a contract similar to the Project. The description of an eligible bidder is contained in the Bidding Documents, particularly, in Section II. Instructions to Bidders.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criterion as specified in the Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act". Bidding is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, partnerships, or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to RA 5183.

Interested bidders may obtain further information from Department of Education, Region IV-A (CALABARZON) and review the Bidding Documents at the address given below during Monday to Friday, 8:00AM to 5:00PM.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be acquired by interested bidders on March 4 to March 10, 2011 from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents in the amount of [illegible].

It may also be downloaded free of charge from the website of the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System and the website of the Department of Education, provided that bidders shall pay the non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents not later than the submission of their bids.

The Department of Education, Region IV-A (CALABARZON) reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract on the grounds of [illegible] and to waive any defect therein, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

For further information, please refer to:

[illegible]
Chairman, BAC Secretariat
Department of Education, Region IV-A (CALABARZON)
[illegible]
Rizal Province

[illegible]
Chairman, BAC

The WORLD

Lilia Lorente B. Sunga

AN ANTIGOVERNMENT protester reacts as he and other demonstrators shout slogans during a demonstration demanding the resignation of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, in Sanaa, Yemen on Tuesday. AP

Yemeni president says US, Israel behind unrest

SANAA, Yemen—Yemen's embattled president on Tuesday accused the United States, his closest ally, of instigating the mounting protests against him, but the gambit failed to slow the momentum for his ouster.

Hundreds of thousands rallied in cities across Yemen against the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, in the largest of the protests of the past month, including one addressed by an influential Shiite cleric in the remote city of Saada, where the US has linked to al-Qaida.

"Do not tell me you achieve your demands," Sheik Abdul-Majid al-Zindani told tens of thousands of demonstrators in the capital of Sanaa. A former US ambassador to Sanaa called al-Zindani's decision to turn against President Ali Abdullah Saleh a major setback for the president.

Saleh warned that the current political turmoil and possible collapse of Saleh's regime could give a further opening to Yemen's offshoot of the global terror network, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

James Jones, former White House National Security Advisor, warned a Washington conference that Yemen's unrest "could deepen the current vacuum of power in Yemen on which Al Qaeda has thrived."

The Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, believed to have been involved in the attempted 2009 bombing of an American airliner, is seen as particularly active and threatening in the US.

Saleh has been a vocal but important US ally in the fight against al-Qaeda, accepting tens of millions of dollars in US military and counterterrorism assistance. Drone strikes on al-Qaeda ranges.

Gerry Reid, deputy assistant US secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism, told the Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington think tank, that the Saleh government was "the best partner we're going to have ... and hopefully it will survive, because I certainly would have to start over again to what we've tried to build."

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Yemen in January and urged Saleh to do more.

However, on Tuesday, Saleh seemed to be moving on. Washington. In a speech to about 500 students and lecturers at Sanaa University, he claimed the US, along with Israel, is behind the protests movement.

"I am going to reveal a secret," he said. "There is an operations room in Tel Aviv with the aim of destabilizing the Arab world. The operations room is in Tel Aviv and run by the White House." AP

WORLD BRIEFS

German minister quits over plagiarism

BERLIN—Germany's popular defense minister dramatically quit on Tuesday over accusations he cheated on his doctorate, robbing Chancellor Angela Merkel's government of one of its brightest stars. "This is the most painful step of my life," Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg, 39, told a hastily convened news conference in Berlin. "I was always ready to fight. But I have reached the limits of my strength." His resignation as defense minister came after two weeks of mounting political pressure for him to quit that in recent days had also included the withdrawal of his academic, political allies and the media. The plagiarism row broke after a law professor close to the opposition said it thought his doctoral thesis and then snowballed as more and more passages were found to be suspect. AFP

3 Tunisian ministers resign

TUNIS—Three more Tunisian ministers resigned on Sunday, leaving the transition government which took over power after the president was overthrown teetering on the brink of collapse. The new resignations created the in the space of 72 hours the prime minister and five ministers have now quit, the second political crisis in Tunisia since veteran leader Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali was ousted a month and a half ago. The resignations follow outstanding street protests over the slow pace of reform since late Ali's departure, with two people killed in clashes between demonstrators and security forces over the weekend. The ministers who resigned on Sunday included Ahmed Ibrahim, Ghaldi, the regional development minister, and Ahmed Brahim, the higher education minister. Reuters

US assault ships in Suez Canal

ISMAILIA, Egypt—Two US amphibious assault ships, the USS Kearsarge and the USS Ponce, entered Egypt's Suez Canal on Wednesday, on their way to the Mediterranean, a canal official said. The ships were at the southern mouth of the canal, the official said, adding that they were expected to pass through by 3:30 p.m. or 4 p.m. local time. The United States had said on Monday it was moving ships and planes closer to Libya, where a revolt against Moammar Gadhafi is into a civil war. The Kearsarge can carry 2,000 Marines. Reuters

Omani soldiers disperse protesters

SOHAR, Oman—Omani troops fired into the air once a pot on Tuesday to clear a fourth day of protests by people demanding jobs and political reforms, a reporting one person in the town of Sohar, witnesses said. "We were about 200 to 300 people on the road. The army started shooting out the air," one protester in Sohar said, declining to be named. Many people ran. The angry protesters also chanted slogans against the army. Omani troops had dispersed protesters in the town of Sohar, 200 miles north of Oman, the witnesses said, and the troops pulled back. Reuters

Egypt's military meets leading public figures

CAIRO—Egypt's military rulers have met with leading public figures, including prominent Islamic Mohamed ElBaradei and former Arab League chief Amr Moussa, to discuss plans for the transition to civilian rule. Tuesday's meeting was led by Field Marshall Hussein Tantawi, the head of the Armed Forces Supreme Council. The council has been ruling Egypt's affairs since longtime President Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down in the face of an 18-day popular uprising. The council said commissioned constitutional amendments that would allow for the transition of powers to civilian rule. But the changes have been criticized by some in the opposition, and many argue it is too soon to hold parliamentary elections. Ali Eddin Hilal, Institute of Global Affairs services Minister, said the meeting explored opposition demands. AP

Protest mode threatens Russia

MOSCOW—Rumblings of protest and increased criticism of the authorities on the Internet prepared a new test for the Russian ruling elite led by Vladimir Putin nine-year before presidential hopeful, analysts said. But while Russia has in the last months experienced a number of protests, including ongoing protests by officials to a highway through a forest and time zones, they do not—for now—pose the risk of an Egypt-style turnaround. The last presidential elections held on March 2, 2008, delivered Dmitry Medvedev to the Kremlin for a four-year mandate, taking over from Putin who had served a maximum two terms and worked become a powerful prime minister. Putin, still seen as Russia's de-facto leader, now has the right to stand again—unprecedented. He and Medvedev have made two things clear—they will not compete against each other and they will decide who will stand beside the time. AFP

UN: Families trapped in Ivory Coast church

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast—The UN said armed men blocked some 60 families without food or water from leaving a church on Tuesday, as war-torn nation escaped the violence plagued neighborhood described "fleeing their stronghold the dead." The UN's refugee agency expressed alarm about the dire conditions the people trapped in the church district of Abidjan after days of violence there. "There are reports of many dead bodies, known burned and others looted, and of young militiamen attacking people inside their homes," the agency said in a statement. She said, Jean Ness, said. Attacks once quickly becoming unbelievable. Several dozen people have been killed over the past week in bloody clashes. "I have at least seven bodies on my way out," he said. "We were fleeing the smell of the dead." Sitting president Laurent Gbagbo has refused to cede power three months after the UN said Alassane Ouattara won the election. The standoff already has claimed the lives of hundreds of Ouattara supporters. AP

Iran cracks down on protesters

TEHRAN—Iranian security forces fired teargas and clashed with antigovernment protesters demonstrating against the wave of opposition leaders, pro-reform websites reported on Tuesday.

Thousands of demonstrators poured into the streets of Tehran and other cities, chanting slogans against the government, the harassers reported.

"Security forces and plainclothes agents fired teargas and clashed with demonstrators in Tehran to disperse them," another opposition website Kalemeh reported.

"Protesters have formed groups in hundreds and are marching toward Tehran's Azadi (Freedom) Square."

Demonstrators defended the release of Mirhossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karoubi, feared to stay in their homes in Tehran since Feb. 14.

In the meantime, thousands of their supporters have taken to the streets, defying a heavy security presence, to look uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, Saifoutmemon said.

Seeking to avoid a revival of mass antigovernment rallies that erupted after a disputed 2009 presidential election, the authorities had warned against any "illegal" gatherings after some opposition websites posted calls for a rally on Tuesday.

"Riot police attacked protesters with batons and electric shocks in Tehran," Kaleme reported.

Two people were killed and dozens arrested during a Feb. 14 rally, the first big show of opposition since the elite Revolutionary Guards crushed street protests in December 2009. Reuters

NZ quake toll rises

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand—Anguished family members visited collapsed buildings where bodies of their loved ones lie trapped on Wednesday more than a week after New Zealand's earthquake, as officials said some remains may never be recovered from the rubble.

The start of the worst hit area in the Feb. 22 disaster was the first time many relatives had been as close to the places where the estimated 240 victims died.

"The mood was somber and it was very emotional for them," police Superintendent Dave Cliff said.

About 250 foreigners and 100 New Zealanders were among the family members who went with officials to the area. The trip was kept private from news crews.

An unknown number of students and staff from Japan, China and other countries were at an English language school in one of the two office buildings that completely collapsed in the magnitude-6.3 quake. Police said last week that up to 120 bodies were inside the Canterbury Television, or CTV, building where the language school was housed.

Cliff said five more bodies had been pulled from the rubble by recovery teams over night Tuesday and on Wednesday, taking the confirmed death toll to 160. Many more people remain missing, and Cliff has said the final tally is likely to be around 240.

Police said the bodies of some victims may never be recovered because they were pulverized by the buildings that collapsed around them. AP

Philippine Electricity Market Corporation

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
2nd INDEPENDENT OPERATIONAL AUDIT OF THE SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES OF THE MARKET OPERATIONS

Project ID No.: 2010-03
Expression of Interest

The Philippine Electricity Market Corporation (PEMC), through the PEMC Audit Committee (AC), invites eligible auditing firms or individuals that intend to secure the services of the Market Operations of the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act 9136, otherwise known as the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (EPIRA) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The auditing firm will be short listed according, but not limited, to the following criteria:

1. Experience in conducting market audits of similar quality; and
2. List of available resources (skills, training and other relevant attributes, etc.).

Interested auditing firms may obtain further information on the conduct of the project, format of letter of interest, and assistance at the Philippine Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) at www.wesm.ph and may submit their letter of interest in a five (5) page maximum, duly signed by the authorized representative of the company in a sealed envelope on or before 15 March 2011, 3:00 p.m. at the following address:

Ms. Marivic L. Guzman
President
Philippine Electricity Market Corporation (PEMC)
6/F Robinsons Equitable Tower
ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center
1600 Pasig City, Philippines
Attention: Ms. Fatima G. Quiazon, IV
Corporate Secretary

The PEMC/AC reserves the right to reject any or all applications without reasons.

(PEMC – March 3, 2011)

LAND REGISTRATION COMPUTERIZATION PROJECT:
Onwards to full computerization towards clean and secure land titles for Filipinos

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SMART
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IN THIS ISSUE
■ SM Investments Corp.
profit up 15% in 2010 /B3

Editor Raul O. Marcelo ● Assistant Editor Carmie S. Mariano
BUSINESS

IN THIS ISSUE
■ Battle for TV audience
share continues /B3

Bangko Sentral hints at rate hike

Inflationary pressures building up fast

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has hinted it might soon raise its key policy rates, saying that while current price movements were still favorable, the buildup of inflationary pressures was reducing its flexibility to keep rates at historic lows.

"Indeed the scope for keeping rates has narrowed," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. told reporters yesterday.

The policy rates stand at record lows of 4 percent for overnight borrowing and 6 percent for overnight lending. The rates have been at these levels since July 2009.

Tetangco said, however, that the central bank was prepared to adjust rates and would do so as soon as such a move would be proven necessary. "The BSP will make further adjustments in policy as and when necessary," Tetangco added.

The next meeting of the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board is on March 24.

At the last meeting held on Feb. 10, the Monetary Board kept the policy rates steady for the 11th consecutive meeting, arguing that inflation estimates still pointed to the sustainability of the official targets for this year and next, but admitted that price pressures were growing.

Yesterday, Tetangco further signaled the central bank's assessment of a building of price pressures. He said accelerated inflation was a consequence of rising income levels as the economy posted a robust growth last year.

"We are mindful of the improved growth prospects for the country, particularly given the better-than-expected growth performance last year," Tetangco said.

The monetary measured in terms of the gross domestic product, grew 7.3 percent last year—the fastest pace in 34 years.

Despite the accelerated growth last year, inflation stood at a benign 3.8 percent last year. The official target for 2010 was between 3.5 and 5.5 percent.

But this year, inflation is expected to accelerate as the impact of higher growth influences demand.

The government targets inflation to settle at 3.8 percent this year and to 2012. With the buildup of inflationary pressures, however, some analysts said the BSP might be forced to raise interest rates soon. Others expect the central bank to do so on March 24.

Price pressures are also building up due to the growing tension in the Middle East, with crude oil prices surging past $100 a barrel. The Philippines imports about 90 percent of its fuel requirements.

INDICATORS

PESO-DOLLAR RATE
March 3, 2011
43.490

STOCK MARKET
March 2, 2011
10.52

Stocks end lower

LOCAL STOCKS pulled back yesterday on some investors locked up gains from the past three sessions.

The main share Philippine Stock Exchange index gave up 10.33 points or 0.28 percent to finish at 3,775.19.

The holding firm, financial, property and industrial counters accounted to profit-taking while the industrial and services counters slept not traded gains.

Value turnover was back to an anemic level of P70.3 million.

There was P328 million worth of net foreign selling for the day.

There were nearly two decliners for every single gainer (89 against 47). As 2,750 proved to be a strong barrier to further declines in the past few days, so has the 3,800 level as an upside barrier. Gains lingering people can stay in the stocks (Last, inchon) thus kept traders within each support and resistance levels.

But while some of the previous days' stellar performers such as Alcorp Equity Ventures fell on profit-taking. There was some bargain-hunting on PLDT.

Lopez-affiliated stocks Rockwell Land and First Holdings and several Ayala stocks Ayala Land and Ayala Corp. also fell.

Lopez Holdings appreciated to complete this year efforts to consolidate its business there and return to profitable ways.

Consumer-focused stocks such as Jollibee and SM Prime also backed the day's downtrend alongside diversified stock Manila Mining as partnership talks with First Pacific-led Philex Mining for the development of Manila Mining's Rapuyan mine in Mindanao. Doris C. Dumlao

MVP firm eyes 49% stake in MRT 3

By Doris C. Dumlao

METRO PACIFIC Investments Corp. is working on new deals to raise its interest in the Metro Railway Transit 3—Mega Manila Inland elevated railway running the streets of Edsa—are at least 49 percent from 29 percent, business sources said yesterday.

MPIC told the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday that it had entered into several agreements with some of the shareholders of Silver Rail Transit Corp., operator of the MRT 3, without saying how much stake it would end up with once the deals were closed.

Industry sources said 49 percent of MRTC shareholders have so far consented to assign their shares to MPIC. The first block of 29 percent ceded to MPIC was owned by the Yuchengco group.

The state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines and Land Bank of the Philippines, the two government financial institutions that accumulated debt and equity payment equivalent to an investment interest of 80 percent of the MRT 3 business in 2009, have not sold their interest and thus still control 11 of 14 seats in the MRTC board, a government source said.

DBP and Landbank previously acquired direct equity in MRTC equivalent to 11.1 percent of common shares and likewise bought outstanding preferred shares that gave them the right to sit on the board and get the dividends from the MRT 3 operations. Apart from controlling the board, the government banks are now getting 80 percent of the economic interest in the form of equity-trust payments.

The common shares eyed by MPIC are the other hand, have been pledged as creditors as some shareholders of MRTC had previously borrowed using such shares as collateral. About 78 percent of MRTC's common shares are thus under the custodianship of investment house ProtoCapital.

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Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR NO. DC2011-02-0002

DECLARING ALL OIL COMPANIES TO ENGAGE IN MUTUAL PRODUCT SHARING ACCOMMODATIONS AND SIMILAR INDUSTRY PRACTICES TO STABILIZE OIL SUPPLY

WHEREAS, pursuant to Republic Act No. 7638, otherwise known as the Department of Energy Act of 1992, it is the declared policy of the State to formulate a continuous, adequate and economic supply of energy with the end in view of ultimately achieving self-reliance in the country's energy requirements;

WHEREAS, consistent with the public policy above, the Department of Energy (DOE) is mandated to establish and implement programs for, among others, the rationalization, marketing, distribution, utilization, stockpiling and storage of energy resources;

WHEREAS, further to its mandate, the DOE shall formulate policies for the planning and implementation of a comprehensive program for the efficient supply and economical use of energy consistent with the approved national development plan, and provide a mechanism for the integration, rationalization and coordination of the various energy programs of the government;

WHEREAS, consistent with Section 7 of Republic Act No. 8479, otherwise known as the Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Act of 1998, the DOE shall encourage private participation in the oil industry which serves the public interest to raise investment, achieve efficiency, coordination and ensure continuous supply of petroleum products, which may include formal and non-formal agreements, collaborations, joint ventures, consortia, marketing agreements, mutual help agreements, joint tanker and pipeline utilization and joint actions on spill control and line protection;

WHEREAS, due to the fact that the Philippines is an archipelago of component territories, terminals, refineries, expansive logistics supply constraints in the islands / areas where they may have limited or no facilities thus resulting to product shortages or non-sale;

WHEREAS, logistics supply constraints become even more apparent on July 13, 2010 when Rp 11 refinery suffered loss of capacity operations in the Philippine consolidated corporation, which operates 60% of the petroleum requirements of Metro Manila and parts of Southern Luzon, and Pilipinas Shell, who shutdown causing disruption in the distribution of petroleum products to the National Capital Region and nearby provinces;

WHEREAS, consistent with accepted industry practices, participants in the downstream oil industry have been engaged in mutual product sales of refinable and blending components of products and commodities to each other in order to continuously supply of petroleum products for the daily needs of the consuming public;

WHEREAS, these arrangements of product accommodations, commonly known as borrow and loan arrangements or mutual product supply accommodations, serve to address efficiency and cost reduction in specific areas by reducing the operating costs of the concerned parties;

NOW, THEREFORE, premises considered, and pursuant to the statutory mandate, the DOE hereby declares as follows:

SECTION 1. Scope and Application. This Circular shall apply to all participants in the downstream oil industry.

SECTION 2. Recognition of Mutual Product Supply Accommodations. The importance and significance of the mutual product supply accommodation is hereby recognized as an accepted trade practice in the industry, provided, that it promotes the public interest and is intended to achieve efficiency, cost reduction and ensure the continuous supply of petroleum products. All stakeholders of industry players are encouraged to continuously enter into existing mutual product supply accommodation agreements with suitable further supply. Consistent with agreements entered into to ensure the stable and continuous supply of petroleum products to the general public and to achieve efficiency and cost reduction.

SECTION 3. Anti-Trust Safeguards. Nothing in this Circular shall be construed to permit any violation or circumvention of the anti-trust safeguards provided under Republic Act No. 10515.

SECTION 4. Effectivity and Publication. This Circular shall be effective immediately upon its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Issued in the Manila, Philippines, 24th day of January 2011.

JOSE RUPIR A. MENDIOLA
Secretary

02 FEB 2011

(PS-March 3, 2011)

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Surigao del Sur
Municipality of Tandag

Bid Bulletin No. 02
Date: February 25, 2011

To : All Prospective Bidders
From : Bids and Awards Committee
Subject : Bid Bulletin No. 02
Location : Bids Conference and Secretariat

Dear Sirs:

1. The BAC-Tandag Office advised the Proponents of the pre-qualified contractors of the Province of Surigao del Sur and Tandag City during the Pre-Bid Conference held on March 1, 2011 at 10:00 A.M. at the Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat.

2. Late Bids Opening of Sealed Proposals will be on March 8, 2011 at 10:00 A.M. in the Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat.

3. For information and guidance of all concerned.

(PS-March 3, 2011)

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SMIC profit up 15% in '10

By Doris C. Dumlao

TYCOON SHOWS: Sy's flagship holding firm, SM Investments Corp., posted a 15-percent growth in its 2010 net income to P18.4 billion.

SMIC's consolidated revenues rose by 12 percent to P179.1 billion from P160 billion, the company disclosed to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

"The factors that supported 2010 results demonstrate the ability of SM to benefit from an economic recovery," SMIC president Hadley Sy said.

Among SM's businesses, the retail group contributed the most to the 2010 profit, accounting for 56 percent of the total. The banking group came in second, with 30 percent, while shopping malls and real estate contributed 10 percent and 13 percent, respectively.

"We are very bullish in the economy and also for our businesses. We have announced a capital expenditure budget of P49 billion and we're sticking to that," SMIC chief finance officer Jose Ma. said.

When asked about the outlook for this year, Ma said the group was closely watching the developments in the Middle East. South Africa said was hoping that the situation would not deteriorate further.

The retail group reported a full-year 2010 net income of P5.4 billion, up by 23.2 percent, and an increase in the margin to 4.2 percent from 3.6 percent. Total sales grew by 9.1 percent to P155.1 billion.

In Luzon, Banco de Oro Unibank and Chinabank posted record high profits of P8.8 billion and P5 billion, respectively, up by 46 percent and 22 percent from a year ago.

Shopping mall unit SM Prime Holdings reported a 12-percent growth in consolidated net income to P7.9 billion on the back of a 14- percent rise in revenue to P23.7 billion.

Battle for TV audience share continues

By Paolo G. Montecillo

THE COUNTRY'S two major television networks are both claiming ratings leadership, citing results of two different surveys.

GMA Network Inc. yesterday said it continued to hold on to its nationwide ratings lead over rival ABS-CBN Corp. in February, citing results of a survey conducted by the Nielsen TV Audience Measurement.

In a statement, GMA said it had an average audience share of 34.2 percent nationwide, while ABS-CBN had 32 percent and TV5, 14.9 percent.

ABS-CBN, citing data from Kantar Media, is claiming leadership in nationwide primetime ratings, with a 41-percent audience share, while GMA had a 21 percent share and TV5, 16 percent.

In overall ratings, ABS-CBN said it had an audience share of 36 percent vis-à-vis GMA's 33 percent and TV5's 13 percent.

Its head Urban Luzon, according to Nielsen TV Audience Measurement, GMA had a 37.9-percent share, while ABS-CBN had 27 percent and TV5, 16.7 percent.

The Nielsen TV Audience Measurement is used by 21 companies including two other local TV networks.

In the meantime, ABS-CBN subscribers to ratings data provided by Kantar Media. It is the only network in the country that does so.

A gift for CG advocates from the SC

POINT OF LAW

Francis Lim

IN A country where corporate governance is not yet a part of the culture, surely do we see the highest court of the land decide a case where the primary consideration is the promotion of good corporate governance.

Not so with our Supreme Court.

In a case, which the Supreme Court, through Associate Justice Arturo Brion, characterized as raising "a legal question on corporate governance," the court championed corporate governance (CG) by upholding the right of shareholders to choose the directors who would run the business and affairs of their company.

The case I am referring to is Wilcon Depot Corporation, Inc. (WDC) vs Edwin Villanueva, et al., G.R. No. 151969, Sept. 4, 2003. In that case, during the 1999 annual shareholders' meeting of WDC, nine individuals were elected to the WDC board. From 1997-2001, however, no stockholders' meeting was held since, allegedly, the requisite quorum could not be established. Consequently, the directors elected in 1996 remained in office as holdover capacity during this period, two of the directors resigned and the remaining holdover directors elected their replacements. One of those elected was Jose Jacinto, who replaced Eduardo Cojuangco.

Some of the shareholders questioned the legitimacy of Jacinto's election. WDC, controlled by the remaining holdover directors, asserted that the power to fill in a vacancy created by the resignation of a holdover director (Mola Group) is expressly granted to the remaining members of the board. WDC argued that, under Sec. 23 of the Corporation Code, a director's term is one year and until his successor is elected and qualified. Therefore, under Sec. 29, the remaining directors, still constituting a quorum, could elect Jacinto to Mola-Ilusorio's replacement.

The Court framed the issue at hand in this wise: "whether the remaining directors of a corporation's board, still constituting a quorum, can elect an other director to fill in a vacancy created by the resignation of a holdover director."

The Supreme Court's resolution of this legal issue hinged on the determination of what constitutes a director's term of office.

Distinguishing between the term and tenure of a director, ruling precedents in public law, the court held that "term" was the "time during which the officer may claim to hold the office as of right, and fixes the interval after which several incumbents have shall succeed one another."

According to the court, the term of office is not affected by the holdover; it is fixed by statute and does not change simply because the office may have become vacant or because the incumbent holds over since a successor has not been elected or has failed to qualify. "Tenure," on the other hand, refers to the period where "the incumbent actually holds office." The tenure may be shorter or longer (in case of holdover) than the term for reasons within or beyond the power of the incumbent.

The Supreme Court's construction of Sec. 23 of the Corporation Code to mean that "the term of the members of the board of directors shall be only for one year, (therefore) their term expires one year after election to the office." The holdover period is not part of the director's term of office, for rather, constitutes part of his tenure. Thus, when an incumbent director continues to serve in a holdover capacity beyond the one-year period for which he was originally elected by the shareholders, he does so, not as part of his term, but as part of his tenure.

In its Decision, the court held that the remaining members of the WDC board, although still constituting a quorum, could not have validly elected Jacinto to replace Abdulfeal since their role as lamest and suspended term to speak of, as the latter's one-year term already expired way back in 2000.

Next, 29 of the Corporation Code limits the filling up of board vacancies by the remaining directors to cases "other than by removal by the stockholders or stockholders or by expiration of term." Thus, Abdulfeal's replacement could only be elected directly by the shareholders, pursuant to the mandatory language of Sec. 29 which provides that the vacancy "must be filled by the stockholders in a regular or special meeting called for that purpose."

To sustain Jacinto's election, the court says, "effectively weakens the stockholders' power to participate in the corporate governance by electing their representatives to the board of directors."

In no uncertain terms, he categorically stating that "a corporation must be governed by a board of directors whose members have been voted for election, and who have actually been elected by the stockholders, an an annual basis", the Supreme Court upheld the shareholders' rights and principles of corporate governance. According to the court, "it is the stockholders' vote that gives legitimacy to the actions of the directors and serves as a tool for exacting director accountability."

The Wilcon Depot case is what the lawyers call a "case of first impression." The Supreme Court may decide these cases one way or the other in the exercise of its exclusive prerogative under the Constitution as the final interpreter of the law. It is understandable then that my opinion agrees with the decision, and frankly, the decision may have gone the other way. What I stated the day for CG advocates may not only the governor's sharp mind, but his pro-corporate governance stance, influenced perhaps by his background as a lawyer in a corporate law firm prior to his going to public service.

Ok, practitioners, know fully well how the shareholders' right to choose the directors of their company is often frustrated by legal maneuvers, such as lack of quorum, lack of proper notice and similar machinations. As a result, investor confidence and the country's reputation in the investment destination are damaged. This was shown in the latest CG Watch 2010 which rated the Philippines last among 11 Asian countries surveyed on good corporate governance.

For a country that has historically lagged very quickly in respect for shareholder rights, the Wilcon decision is welcome news and should together with other measures that our regulators and some well-meaning quarters in the private sector are implementing, elevate us to the global arena of corporate governance.

(The author former president and CEO of the Philippine Stock Exchange, is a senior partner in the Angara Abello Concepcion Regala & Cruz Law Offices or ACCRALAW. He can be contacted through fdlim@accralaw.com)

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LIFESTYLE Food

Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan

RACKS
SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN

KAMOTE Nutritious, cheap as dirt (it's, have a rich nutritional value...

Kamote Tops Crackling with Adobo Dip

The dip is very simple–only two ingredients –but makes a very tasty accompaniment

D.I.Y. DO-IT-YOURSELF

By Norma O. Chikiamco
contributor

THE KAMOTE (sweet potato) may seem like poor man's food, but given the right treatment, it has rich possibilities.

Recently I attended a dinner hosted by Bert and Chris Lopez that had kamote as the KAMOTE C3

No vinegar and pepper, just soy sauce and–sugar?

By Margie Baga-Reyes

IT'S AMAZING how adobo—no matter how basic, regular and a no-brainer kind of dish it is—can be distinctive and extra-special to every Filipino family cat there.

Annie Lim Kaw peng's version contains no vinegar and pepper but it's loaded with soy sauce and sugar, thus offering a lovely sweetish flavor. Kaw peng says this is a Chinese way of cooking adobo, which, in a way, becomes a cross existing with the inclusion of sugar.

Since the Chinese cooks hardly use vinegar in their dishes, the soy sauce becomes the star of the show, while also adding to the coloring of adobo.

When the soy sauce and other liquids have been reduced, only the tasty chunk of is left, which makes for a perfect topping on a mound of rice.

"When I was growing up, this was already my idea of adobo," says Kaw peng. "Only when I got older and learned to cook so many dishes did I realize this thing be-ar adobo has vinegar and other spices."

The original recipe came from her mother-and-law grandmother who would cook the dish for hours with just pork and soy sauce and no water. Kaw peng watered a stronger flavor, she then added leeks, garlic, star anise, dried mushroom and star anise. She would tie the leeks, drop them on the pan and later discard them.

And this adobo must not be served on the dining table without hard-boiled eggs.

"This is already a variation from my mom," says Kaw peng, a housewife, foodie

KAW PENG: "Adobo is our national dish at home."

Annie Lim Kaw peng's version, a Chinese variant, also comes with hard-boiled eggs

and recipe editor of the proud editions of The ...mption High School Class of '79 Cook-book."

"Our adobo always has hard-boiled eggs. Once served with hot rice, each of us would all grab the egg."

'National dish'

We, adobo has been the national dish at her home. She cooks adobo as her three children's hom. Though the ones pare (pork leg) at times, she prefers lempo (pork belly) for a shorter cooking process. She cooks about two to three kilos of pork, apportions them to customers, labels and

INQUIRER C3

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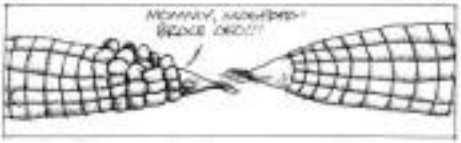

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HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS ESMAE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that each row, column, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. For more programs or www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

4	1	7	3	6	9	8	2	5
6	3	2	1	5	8	9	4	7
9	5	8	7	2	4	3	1	6
8	2	5	4	3	7	1	6	9
3	7	4	6	9	1	5	8	2
1	6	9	8	5	2	4	7	3
2	8	6	5	1	3	7	9	4
5	4	3	9	7	6	2	3	1
7	9	1	2	4	5	6	3	8

Concepts Sudoku By Dave Green

8								3
7				2				1
			8	5	3			
		3		4		1		
	2	1				6	4	
		9		1		8		
			7	3	5			
3				9				2
1								6

Difficulty Level ★★★

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Need a different way to celebrate birthday? Try wine and cheese tasting

KITCHEN RESCUE

Angie Ayson

Or you can call for a cheese board, or an appetizer platter filled with cold cuts

Chicharon, Gyoza, Vietnamese Pho —who says veggie fare is boring?

WORD OF MOUTH

Xarnely Dacer

No vinegar and pepper...

Kamote Tops...

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What Margarita Fores will do for Capiz–grilled 'diwal' drizzled with mushroom truffle paste, 'bangus' mouse on 'chicharon'

COUNTRY COOKING

Mickey Fores

HARVESTED! Lucbanbo shellfish being measured with a caliper

Dilis, or angel's wings

GRILLING diwal at a Baybay food stall

'Capiznihan sa Arareta,' on March 4-5, spotlights the province's food heritage to draw tourists

FINALLY, Capiz has found a way to sell itself. Not through its beaches or churches, the way most provinces attract local tourists. Capiz has chosen to process its food.

The options we cut at reputable restaurants are usually dropped daily from Capiz. From the hot rooks, scallops and lapu-lapu that find their way to our tables. But those aren't branded. Not yet.

It is a bit of a push is needed in Manila, and the event, "Capiznihan sa Arareta," will be held March 4-5, Friday at Centro in Cubao in the metro, for a photo exhibit, street dancing, Capiz cuisine on display and, most important, a seafood fair in Dumpa, homer's Market.

Teaser

Capiz officials hosted a teaser two weeks ago. At Gateway Mall, Araneta Center, Margarita Fores presented the shellfish in the simplest way. The long table had the freshly shucked oysters, grilled scallops and diwal, the large crabs were just steamed, the red coral of the female tempting but good.

More "Capiznihan" preservations included that of seafood (bulgar, spiny) cooked steamed in salt, and prawns in linguine with tomato. Desserts had halaya-ornate brulee and grilled bananas with palut (rice topped).

To be sure, the seafood when cooked at Dumpa would be more on the grill and steamed. The event, I imagine, will be like that of Baybay in Roxas City where several stalls display the seafood and the diner chooses which one to have and how to cook them. One usually goes through a wall of grill smoke—not sometimes because the aroma increases the appetite.

As more up-to-date traveling-cooking group headed in Capiz, our thoughts were about roasting diwal again, dagat's wings or diwal (Placina Orientalis) was once so rare and so expensive because the supply was limited. Overharvesting depleted the numbers.

Thankfully, a program to save the diwal was done by the local government, and with the help of marine experts from University of the Philippines Visayas in Miagao and Seafdec Grouthead Asian Fisheries Development Center.

First, harvesting was halted, then extensive seeding was done. Last year, it was reported that the diwal had an oversupply, so the price went down to P50 a kilo when it used to be P200 to P300.

Avoiding over-harvesting

How can over-harvesting be avoided? Perhaps we can learn from the methods of women shellfish pickers of Cambodon in Galicia, Spain. They have traditionally been harvesting and restocking the flats at the shorelines even in harsh temperatures (at least so far). Whenever they pick a shell, they carry a caliper to measure the shell. They return shellfish that are too small. They also have to report to their headquarters after harvest. the shellfish are weighed to ensure the harvesters get just enough.

Many countries also have associations of producers such as fruit growers and livestock suppliers. They not only market but also undertake scientific research and work together for the benefit of their products.

There is such a move for diwal suppliers, according to Imelda Garrido of the Roxas City Agriculture Office. But, sometimes, the lure of individual profit wrecks the organization. The short-term reward isn't good for diwal and for Capiz.

I hope everyone will work together the way they did when diwal was on the verge of extinction.

At the Capiznihan tasting, Fores had the grilled diwal drizzled with mushroom truffle paste. And for the oysters, she added to the usual vinegar dip grilled pineapple salsa and a sweet-caramel gravy.

She also presented bangus mousse on top of small chicharon.

But some of the other pieces dazzled (enjoy the bibingkit fish eggs) served with the scallops on the linguine with the prawns and loved the concoctions.

Remember, though, freshly grilled diwal can stand on its own. Its succulent taste is all that's needed. And Capiz food is all that's needed to promote the province.

E-mail pinaytrail04@yahoo.com.

Seafood Platter

DINING OUT

FISH and Co., known for its seafoodthen, had beefed up its menu with some new dishes. Plus, it offers a (not-so) promo: an order of any meal entree gets one tomato c "just for Me" seafood dish for only P1.

The "Plus" offer lets diners enjoy Fish & Chips, Seafood Platter 1, Seafood Curry, Seafood Spaghetti Marinara or Prawns Mojitos for only P1 until March 31.

The latest dishes, meanwhile, include Braised Beef Ribs, savory slices of slow-cooked short ribs; BBQ Pork Ribs, specially marinated and grilled and served with homemade barbecue sauce—they're available in half-rack, half-rack and "just for me" servings; Sizzling Bangus Tanigue, Crispy Pata—pork leg and knuckles air-dried and fried to a crisp. Tropicana pizza, freshly baked thin pizza with honey ham and pineapple chunks spread; Italian Sausage pizza, which comes covered with plenty pork sausages; and Chicken Curry, dressed in homemade spicy red coconut. These new dishes complement the restaurant's top mostly bestsellers such as the Grilled Fusha-top Seafood, Chicken Pesto, Grilled Mediterranean Tenderloin, Breaded Chicken Piggyback and Seafood Pasta Extravaganza. All Fish & Co. Servings are generous and are meant for sharing.

Fish and Co. is located in Greenhill S. Mall, tel. 7259411 to 32; Shangri-La Plaza Mall, tel. 6013140 to 42; SM Mall of Asia, tel. 5360860; Trinoma, tel. 3910205 to 20; and Alabang Town Center, tel. 8882080.

SCALLOPS AND CHILI PRAWNS SKEWERS

Bluefish (G/F of the new Eastwood Mall, tel. 9006844) offers Scallops and Chili Prawns Skewers, Buffalo Shrimps, Fish Pesto Fusilli, Tuna Pizza Ala Crab, Crab Singapore, Calamari Puro Negro, Chilean Seabass, Cioppino Spaghetti, Crab Casino, Crab Pasta, Oyster Rockefeller, Moroccan Sea Bass cooked with couscous, among others.

THAI CHILI CRAB

Cravetable offers Seafood Roll, Shumai-ka Dumplings, Thai Shrimp Pancakes, Steamed Garlic Oysters, Sate Baki Ribs, Golden Fried Cocot Duck, Cantonese Ribs, Shrimp Pad Thai, Happy Birthday Noodles, Salt and Pepper Squid. Cravetable branches are at Rockwell Power Plant Mall, Makati City (tel. 7385463); Shangri-La Plaza Mall (tel. 9104094); Trinoma Mall (tel. 9810807); and Alabang Town Center (tel. 7712984).

MEXICAN VEGETARIAN PIZZA

Burritos & Tacos Mexican Kitchen (G/F, Salcedo Building, Jim Jones), owned by Phillip Tan, offers chips with dips. Other bestsellers are Fish Taco, Mexican Vegetarian Pizza and Shrimp Burrito.

THREE-WAY SQUID

Red Crab adds a twist to the traditional Salabong Feast by serving it in three different ways. Enjoy the Filipino favorite by trying all three variations: with coconut milk; with tangy pineapple and calamansi; baked; and simply the classic salabong feast. Ended up to small bowls, the squid sets up your palate for the main crab specials ahead. Visit The Red Crab Mirasol House at the G/F of The Venice Piazza, McKinley Hill, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City (tel. 4010011), or at 2/F Robert's Wine Manila, Hampers Cayabel. 8560007).

MOJITO

Mojito Manila is now co-at Chili's branches at Greenhills (7283833), Greenhills (7272995), Tomas Morato (3122817), and Chili's Tao at the Power Plant Mall, Rockwell (8995027). Mojito flavors include Very Berry, the sensational Mango Mojito and the tangy Strawberry Mojito. The Classic Mojito is also available for those who prefer the traditional Mojito recipe.

Kamote Tops Crackling with Adobo Dip

From page E1

leaves become crisp. Transfer to a colander or to a plate lined with paper towels to drain. Serve with Manta Sita's adobo dip.

Manta Sita's Adobo Dip:
1 ½ tbsp Manta Sita's Adobo Mix
1 cup sour cream

Mix adobo mix and sour cream. Chill before serving.

Cook's tips:

- For more dry the leaves well before dipping them into the flour mixture so they don't sputter when dropped into the hot oil.
- To dry the leaves, put them in a colander and let them stand at room temperature for about one hour. Or, you can pat them dry with paper towels.
- A large slotted spoon or a wire skimmer is useful for transferring the cooked leaves into a colander, as this lets the oil drip back into the pan when you remove the leaves from the pan.

Thai or Filipino? Take your pick–they're both good

THE QUIET DINER

RESTOS AT A GLANCE

EATING out in Manila has never been a problem. What is difficult is choosing the restaurant that executes and serves the chosen cuisine well.

Does an Ilonggan, a restaurant that belongs to a popular Filipino chain has always served Filipino food a notch higher. The only Thai restaurant in Alabang, meanwhile, can take pride in what its kitchen DEPARTS.

Sentro 171

2/F, Serendra, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig; tel no. 8560055

This is the former Bistro, managed by the same Hopia family. It is now taken full, or make your reservations early.

Dining area—Extensive, truly done in neutral colors. Tables and chairs are arranged in such a way that there's enough leeway to move and for staff to have easy access to diners. The kitchen is in full view of the customers through a window.

Service—Comparatively quick. Menu cards are immediately presented , orders are taken quickly as well.

Staff—Efficient and unobtrusive.

Suggested Menu—Take the Crispy Hito as appetizer. The old Bistro favorites are gone—the Tofu Gazebo and the Fish in slightly soupy sauce. However, the menu maintains its menu. Stepping to Curried Beef and other PH-pino dishes. Try on the Grilled Pork—flavorful. Perhaps the menu needs to do something more to its Desserts to make it approximate the authentic Italian dish. The menu is extensive, ready before making your orders.

Service and government charges are added to the bill. Senior citizen cards are honored.

Rating

Ban-ku Thai cuisine

(G/G, Ayuntes Building, Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa City).

This is a no-frills restaurant serving what has become one of the our favorite cuisines, Thai.

Dining area—Simple, more like the big dining room of a big house. There's a bar on the right side with stools. Hanging Harlequin and metal-privates room on the left. Thai paintings adorn the walls sparingly. There is a newspapers rack.

Service—Considering we only visited two main mealtimes, the service was fast and efficient. Food comes in quick succession.

Staff—They were not with traditional Thai warmth. Owner has done her rounds into the province. The owner has a Resident Thai Chef.

Suggested Menu—Start with a very refreshing Iranian Basil Shake, made of flours crushed ice with basil—the flavor becomes immense as the ice melts. Follow up with the sweet Sour "Pineapple" with minced chicken, potatoes, carrots and corn kernels. Have the Tom Yang soup and the Pla Duek Foo, dried fish that remains crispy in brown sauce, and, of course, the Phad Thai. Rice is either cooked with pineapple, fried or glutinous.

Finish their your meal with the usual Tak Tak, the traditional dessert of banana leaf. To read a satisfying experience, call for the Water Chestnut results, a mound of (again) finest ice blended with real natural bits of chestnuts, plus surprising whole nuts at the bottom of the glass.

Government and services charges are collected. Senior citizen cards are honored.

Rating

RATING INDEX: Poor, Good, Excellent

ENTERTAINMENT

Edita Ebreo-G. Velarde

HEARD

LONDON—Actor Colin Firth in BBC radio after winning the Oscar for "The King's Speech": "I would like to do something ... Out silence the now ... I think it's time to continue my long run drive of making a fool of myself." Reuters

Vows in the magic hour

The sky was a stunning shade of orange as John and Priscilla exchanged 'I do's' in perfect timing

NEWLYWEDS John Estrada and Priscilla Meirelles

By Reyeni San Diego Jr.

MISA CHAWIL head Cory Velasco, who was a witness, described the nuptial ceremony as "emotional."

As the vocal group 92 AD sang "When God Made You," TV host John Estrada and beauty queen Priscilla Meirelles became husband and wife.

"The bride was walking down the aisle and the groom was already crying," Velasco related. "There was not a dry eye at the venue (Dreamkrisler Euro Asian Resort & La Union), especially when John said that his wife was that his late manager Douglas Quijano was there to witness his wedding."

Actor Richard Gomez, best man, agreed with Velasco: "It was solemn, but adventurous being."

The vows were heartwarming, recounted bridesmaids, Reja Cruz Bolivar, "It was a lovely wedding. Touching."

"It was a joyous celebration, too," Velasco added.

Estrada cracked up the guests when he rendered a song which he claimed he had "composed" for Meirelles.

Turned out, he crooned an old song, Luther Vandross' "Til Ballet."

Two cultures

Meirelles wanted the ceremony to be a "union of two cultures," explained photographer Charlene Triste.

(She's Brazilian, he's Filipino. It's Faye, she's second fly at mid-lapse—after the breakup of his relationship with actress Jennylyn Mercado.)

The Estrada-Meirelles nuptials ended, poetically, at dusk.

"By the end of the ceremony, the sky was a stunning shade of orange. It was perfect timing," recalled Triste, whose studio also covered the weddings of Regine Velasquez and Ogie Alcasid, Lara Aldeen and Juno Lindo, Jenny Miller and Cogie Herd, also the same-sex wedding of Jolina Sevilla and Luke Calayan.

A day before Estrada and Meirelles tied the knot, a golf tournament was mounted for the male guests, while the ladies had spa treatments.

Then also documented the presidential events. The couple's Press Preps pictorial was published in a booklet, copies of which were given away to friends. A TV special on ABS-CBN is in the works.

The newlyweds, who were cruising to Manila-Orita for the ceremony, stayed at the resort over the weekend. But Estrada went back to work on the daily noontime show "Happy Time, Sabay" on Monday.

Otto, the program that caused the groom's riff with original "host mo!" Willie Revillame, who was a no-show, of course.)

Estrada is also in the cast of the regular soap, "Minsan Lang Kitang Minahal."

In a previous interview, Estrada told the Inquirer that Meirelles is ever "supportive and understanding" in spite of the grueling demands of his new TV assignments.

E-mail: bayanihan@gmail.com

IT WAS a solemn, yet adventurous beauty-celebration, said some of the wedding sponsors.

JOHN crooned up the guests when he sang his own version of Luther Vandross' "I'd Rather."

She wasn't about to be 'a sideshow'

By Alan Policarpio
Contributor

JANICE de Belen

JOHN LUTHER and Priscilla Meirelles' beach wedding last Saturday was a star-studded occasion. Among those who were guests at the romantic ceremony were Lotlot de Leon, Tuesday Vargas, Ai-Ai delas Alas, Ogie Alcasid, Regine Velasquez and Kris Aquino. Also present were John's children with Janice de Belen—Isab, Bimby, Kayla and Sam, who were part of the entourage.

Awkward

Not a few guests wondered, where was Janice?

In an interview aired on "Pinoy Idol" on Sunday, Jan said she skipped her ex-husband's wedding because she didn't want to make things awkward for everybody on their anniversary at resorts.

"Everybody deserves a chance to be happy. And like I've said before, having the assured as they want a new life together is really weird. They didn't need me there," Janice said.

"Wrong naman, nasing gawing drama ang hatid nito. And I also don't want to be a nobelista," she added.

On "The Buzz" that same day, Jolin was asked if he felt the need to inform Janice about the wedding beforehand.

"Kaya kailangan talaga, babes kinde? Para ikaw! Ate ge nasaan na kayo? Ganyan? Ge nagpaparamdam! Ahaha! Nakuuu! Na-hurting kasi ng Janice ... Alinggal na ge kaming seminal, mga seven or eight years na ge," he said. "Pero I really appreciate Janice being the mother of my kids. She's a wonderful mother."

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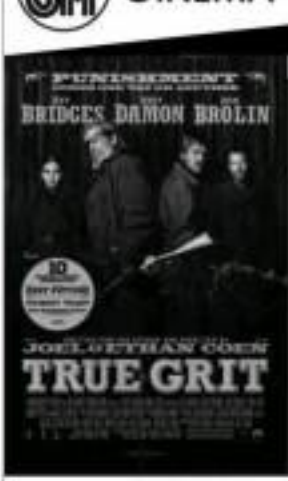

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"I took out for the upcoming romance science thriller film loosely that stars Matt Damon based on the Philip K. Dick short story."

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Oscars program widely panned

LOS ANGELES—Television audiences for Sunday's Oscar ceremony fell almost seven percent compared to a year ago, according to early ratings data on Monday from major US cities.

Television critics widely panned the Oscar telecast, hosted for the first time by actors Anne Hathaway and James Franco, in what was seen as a bid by organizers to attract younger viewers.

But the 3 1/2-hour show, which awarded royal movie "The King's Speech" best film honors and three other Oscars, held up well in the 18-49 demographic most coveted by advertisers, according to Nielsen figures.

The initial number of viewers will be released later by Nielsen. But Sunday's ceremony broadcast on ABC was already the most-watched TV show of the night, with more than double the audience of other TV networks combined.

Last year, the Oscars was watched by 41.7 million viewers in the United States, the largest TV audience for the stars in five years.

Reviews of Sunday's efforts by Hathaway at 28 the youngest host in Oscar history and Franco, 32, nominated star of "127 Hours," were harsh.

The Hollywood Reporter said the ceremony "could go down as one of the worst Oscar telecasts in history." The New York Times complained: "The prolonged effort to pander to younger viewers was downright painful." The Boston Herald remarked mostly that "references to the Internet, apps and hashtags do not make a show trendy, or, alas, entertaining."

Time magazine said the experiment of using actors rather than traditional entertainers had largely failed, and that Franco, in particular, "seemed to retreat into a haze, mumbling, squinting and clasping his hands in front of him." Reuters

MOVIE TIME

GLORIETTA 4

1: DRIVE ANGRY (3D)
2: FASTER
3: I AM NUMBER FOUR (2D)
4: NEVER LET ME GO
5: SHARK ATTACK
6a: WHO'S THAT GIRL
7: JUST GO WITH IT

GREENBELT 3

1: I AM NUMBER FOUR
2: WHO'S THAT GIRL

GREENBELT 5

1: FASTER
2: I AM NUMBER FOUR (3D)
3: NEVER LET ME GO
4: UNKNOWN
5: BLACK SWAN

ALABANG TOWN CENTER

1: FASTER
2: I AM NUMBER FOUR (3D)
3: DRIVE ANGRY (3D)
4: UNKNOWN
5: WHO'S THAT GIRL

AYALA CENTER CEBU

1: I AM NUMBER FOUR
2: FASTER
3: DRIVE ANGRY (3D)
4: WHO'S THAT GIRL

MARQUEE

1: I AM NUMBER FOUR
2: DRIVE ANGRY (3D)
3: FASTER
4: WHO'S THAT GIRL

MARKET! MARKET!

1: DRIVE ANGRY (3D)
3: FASTER
3: I AM NUMBER FOUR
4: TEMPORARILY CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
5: TEMPORARILY CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
6: WHO'S THAT GIRL
7: UNKNOWN

TRINOMA

1: WHO'S THAT GIRL
2: JUST GO WITH IT
3a: I AM NUMBER FOUR (3D)
4a: DRIVE ANGRY (3D)
5: SHARK ATTACK
6a: UNKNOWN
7: FASTER

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Possibly too old to enjoy traveling

BACK STORY

Lara Yadiyyo

The thought of a crowded airport, long lines at immigration and the arduous security check are starting to wear me down

AT 5 O'CLOW ekler, I find myself stalking in dobbe it next.

When I was younger, I remember getting really excited at the prospect of boarding to the airport. Sweeping through duty free shops, and finally getting on the plane. Once on board, I loved checking the entertainment guide to see what movies were playing, and I actually enjoyed airline meals.

Nowadays, though, the thought of a crowded airport, long lines at immigration, and the arduous security check are starting to wear me down.

Let me walk you through my most recent travel day. (As I write, I just arrived in Los Angeles; this was what happened.)

It was 5:30 p.m. on a Sunday, which translated to two hours of crazy traffic. Since my daughter was attending a birthday party, Bob and I left the house early to pick her up, and had her tag along to Naia Terminal 2.

As we got closer to the terminal, my little one started to get more emotional that mama was leaving her. (Who's fine now, thanks to FaceTime.—Apple's video chat software.—I get to see her everyday in there.)

By 7:30 p.m. our car was at the drop-off point, and my husband grabbed a cart for me. The sidewalk was crowded with people, many of whom were not actually traveling that night. It's a phenomenon I don't quite understand, to be honest.

It took me about 10 minutes before I reached the check-in counter, but my efforts were alleviated by helpful people every step of the way.

At 8:30 p.m. I went through the check-in process and security. Although the airport was busy, the lines were all moving fast enough, owing to the efficiency of the ground staff.

No rush

My patience wasn't tested, nor did I feel stressed that I was trying to rush. Even the security guards were helpful and volunteered to help with a heavy bag. I headed to the Mabuhay Lounge to grab a few minutes of quiet time. Unfortunately the airport's Wi-Fi network hadn't worked one that afternoon.

Boarding time at 9 p.m. Everyone had formed a line to watch the pro-boarding security check. It's usually at this time that I expect chaos to ensue, but no such thing took place that night. There was a long line forming, and passengers looked very patient as they waited.

The security check included: a bag check (manual and/or X-ray machine); a footwear check; and a manual body check. It went by very quickly.

Here's a tip to make things go more quickly: Wear slip-on shoes or unlace your shoes while still in line. It'll make taking them off and putting them back on easier. It also helps to avoid slowing the check—it lightens the metal detectors.

The plane took off on this day at 11 p.m. (awesome! However, I had a feeling I would not get any sleep as my seat mate had started snoring very loudly, a few hours in. I asked the flight attendant for a pair of earplugs... they don't block the sound completely, but they help enough. After changing my clothes, I was able to get some shut-eye. And yes, the airline food was actually pretty good!

LA time

Now, we switch to Los Angeles time for the same argument.

At 7 a.m., still on Sunday night, the plane landed...a half hour later than scheduled. Immigration was a little slower than 10 have liked it to be, but everyone eventually got off.

Quick line

The first place I visited was the ladies' room, as I know that the immigration line might last an hour. This line actually moved pretty quickly, and I was in front of the officer in about half an hour. Tip: Know which line you're supposed to fall into. I spied a few people getting into the wrong line, only to start over in the correct one. After a 13-hour flight, this was the last thing you wanted.

By 7:30 p.m. I got to the dreaded part: baggage claim. Because there were two PAL flights to Los Angeles that night, the baggage conveyor fell to some of the previous flight's bags as it took a good 20 minutes before all those bags were off loaded. I saw the guys in charge on the ground were doing slow turns, but unconcerned by hundreds of tired passengers who wanted nothing more than their bags and beds.

At 8:20 p.m. my bags finally appeared. A general staff member helped get them on my cart, and I headed to the exit line. 60 yes, more waiting. Thankfully a familiar face to show his...Ate Lalin, kept me company.

At 8:35 p.m. I pushed my bags in the cart and called my sister to pick me up. Once in, I called my family to let them know I've arrived safely—tired, always but grateful that my long travel day had now officially ended.

Condolences

My family sends condolences and prayers to The Down from mum Ami Pangan and family on the death of his mother Brenda Down Pangan. Condolences to peace. The Dow. You are missed.

And finally, thanks to Lara Salinas and the staff of Peninsula Manila in Bohol for taking care of my mother during her brief stay there. She really enjoyed herself and wants us to come visit soon!

Mr. Gay World 2011 finals set March 13

By Kevin Adina

THE PHILIPPINES will host the 2011 Mr. Gay World pageant, making it the first Asian country to stage the international competition.

To mark the event, reigning titleholder Chad Van Den Berg of South Africa paid the country a visit late last year to launch a campaign promoting HIV/AIDS awareness among gay men.

The "Red Ribbon" campaign brought Van Den Berg around the metropolis, speaking about HIV prevention together with representatives from the Department of Health and the United Nations Development Programme.

He also helped distribute red ribbon pins to increase awareness about HIV/AIDS and put up posters that seek to educate the public about the fatal disease.

This campaign is not new for the 26-year-old student. Back in South Africa, he is involved with Health-Mbila, a US-funded initiative focused on HIV/AIDS education.

Meanwhile, national pageant organizer Wenrawk Interntainment announced that 2010 winner Gherwin Ahmad has been stripped of his title due to "not called for behavior." He first ran up, Marc Ernest Blalo, will now represent the Philippines in the Mr. Gay World pageant.

Blalo, a 24-year-old nurse, was among the heavy favorites

CHARL Van Den Berg, reigning Mr. Gay World from South Africa

during last year's local search. He is now aiming to bag the country's first win in the international competition.

Pilipinos are invited to vote for Blalo in an online search at www.mrgayworld.net, in print ballots to be provided at Philippine-based embassies from Brazil, Australia and the United States. Fans may vote once per day.

Bill Blalo rehearsing for Mr. Gay World 2011 finals

Bill Blalo submits Mr. Gay World 2011 finals